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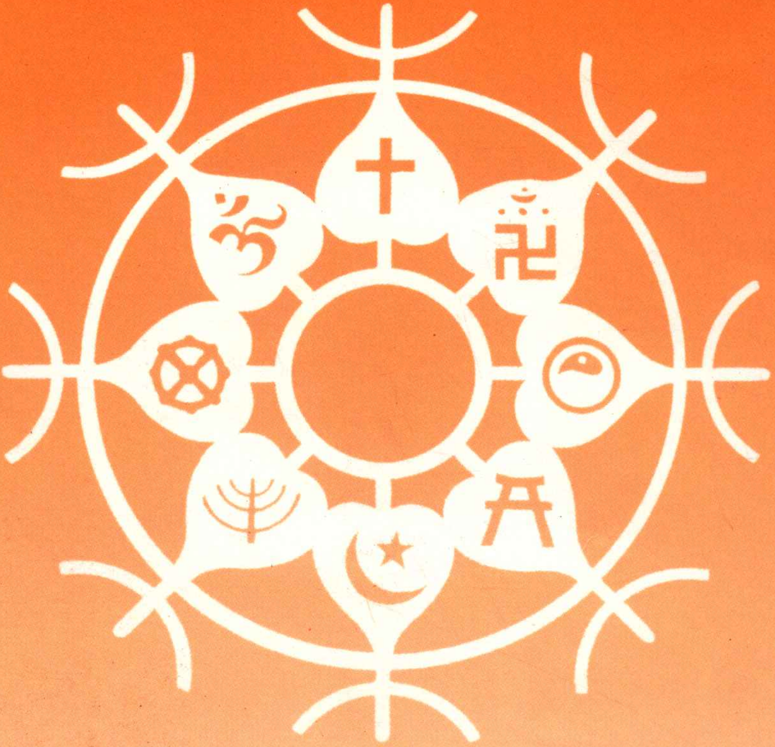

RATIONALITY OF MYSTICISM

October-December 2005 Vol. 30, No. 4

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Editorial

IS THERE A REASON FOR ADMITTING MYSTICISM?

Human quest for the ultimate understanding of reality seems to be unquenchable. The rigour and ingenuity with which various intellectual disciplines have been formed and perfected over the centuries testify to the human ability to soar higher and higher, accessing the ever-deeper and unfathomable dimensions of reality. The undying and ever-stronger determination and commitment on the part of seekers to unravel the inner recesses of reality against the deep and profound dimensions of the same reality that challenge human inquisitiveness continue to elicit renewed spirit and novel strategies. It would be preposterous to restrict this process exclusively to those rigorous scientific disciplines and the studies that they carry out. In fact, every human attempt is capable of taking us a step closer to the understanding of reality.

The application of logical reasoning in almost all human endeavours and its apparent success in most of such disciplines, especially in delivering instant practical solutions to human needs, have erroneously made it synonymous with the expressions 'scientific', 'systematic', 'true', etc. This equation wrongly assumes that human intelligibility is exclusively restricted to logical reasoning, although there are many other dimensions to it. It is unfortunate that anything that does not fit into the mould of logical reasoning is rejected as farce or even erroneous. Of late, even the stringent intellectual disciplines such as physical sciences have come down, however, to admit their own inability to provide an ultimate understanding of reality; even they admit the insufficiency of the methods they employ, which otherwise were considered to be foolproof in delivering the ultimate answers that humanity was searching for. Moreover, philosophy, the science of all sciences, that attempts to solve the ultimate questions of life and reality, has not been successful in delivering its promises: looking at the answers provided by a multitude of philosophies, the situation is only compounded, defying any instant or long-term universally acceptable solution.

It is against this background that we look at the reality of religion as an equally valid human inquiry into the ultimate reality, but by adopting a different rationale that, at times, apparently contradicts with the 'systematic' or 'logical' reasoning. Religion is not a queer invention to cater to the oddities of individuals and societies; instead, religion gives expression to an important dimension of the existential need of human nature which is a fine balancing of the emotional and the intellectual, culminating in a world of ultimate significance: "in its proper mode, religion is a complex of myths, symbols, beliefs, doctrines, codes, practices, and rituals whose function is to empower its participants to make trans-natural integrations so that they may be 'carried away' into a world of ultimate significance."[1] This is not to undermine the role of logical reasoning within the religious sphere, but to underline the fact that there are other effective tools or capabilities available to human beings than those employed by mere logical reasoning in accessing the inner recesses of reality.

A significant characteristic mark of the contemporary human consciousness is its preoccupation with the interior dimensions, which Bernard Lonergan has identified as "the turn to interiority."[2] It is said that a consciousness of spiritual emptiness or poverty pervades the humankind. In fact, I tend to believe that the present generation is becoming all the more aware of a spiritual emptiness, and a consequent thirst, that the traditional forms of religious practices have not been able to quench. Many traditional religions are incapable of meeting the challenging demands of a generation that has already outgrown the human, religious, and structural parameters set in an alien milieu almost thousands of years ago. A quest for the interior or the spiritual that is visible across all continents and among all religionists shall be seen as a positive thrust of the present generation for identifying and experiencing the ultimate significance of human existence, which gets blurred amidst the increasing concerns for the mundane affairs. At this point we find many informed seekers deserting religions of their childhood, taking refuge in some others that purport to be offering spiritual solace and mystical experience in quenching the thirst for the Transcendental: what they yearn for is *that* personal experience of the Ultimate which the traditional ritualistic practices and organizational setups of most major religions cannot offer. Many a time, these newly found religions and their norms also end up in displacing seekers from one setup to another, but ultimately failing to respond to their genuine religious yearnings that cannot be catered to within any restricted framework; so, the need of such believers is not a change from one religion to another, but a readiness to transcend every limiting factor in their search for genuine personal religious experience, which is otherwise mediated by one or another religious tradition.

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[1] John V. Apozyhski, "Mysticism and Epistemology," *Studies in Religion* 14, 2 (1985), 201. Opinions of two philosophers are worth quoting here, as both try to question and ridicule religious and mystical experiences. According to Bertrand Russell, "We can make no distinction between the man who eats little and sees heaven and the man who drinks much and sees snakes. Each is in an abnormal physical condition, and therefore has abnormal perceptions" (Bertrand Russell, *Religion and Science*, London: Oxford University Press, 1935, 188). C.D. Broad holds that "One might need to be slightly 'cracked' in order to have some peep-holes into the super-sensible world." C. D. Broad, "Arguments for the Existence of God, II," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 40 (1939), 164.

[2] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003, 316.

Religion as a search for the Transcendental is an inherent dimension of human existence, although its external form seems to vary from person to person, tradition to tradition, and culture to culture. Religion cannot be treated as a precious stone or rare book shelved safely against all possible threats or damage, which gets a chance to be exhibited at a prescribed moment/s on the prescribed day/s (the Sunday service, for example, in the case of Christians), but a living reality that runs through every aspect of human beings who must live it wholeheartedly each and every moment in their continued religious existence irrespective of the status, affinity, or affiliation. It is a trans-rational existential approach to the human conditions; resolutions of these problems are searched for within an initial framework supplied by certain fundamental assumptions about reality, a framework which is expanded and extended by integrating insights received at the individual and communitarian levels of religious horizons.

Friedrich von Hügel, in his work *The Mystical Element of Religion*, lists three elements that are essentially present in any institutionalized religion. They are (1) organizational or institutional, (2) speculative or intellectual, and (3) experiential or mystical.[3] Although von Hügel is of the opinion that a proper balancing of all these three elements is necessary for a proper and healthy approach to religion as a unified reality, I tend to think that any laxity on or neglect of the experiential or mystical dimension of religion will distort its own inner spirit,[4] leaving only a lifeless structural edifice, which, in turn, would become a worn-out system incapable of providing any assistance to its believers in appropriating a transcendental or trans-rational perspective in approaching and realizing the ultimate nature of reality and in finding answers to the ultimate questions that haunt humanity from its beginnings. Moreover, experientially-oriented or mystically disposed believers (if they are on the right track) will reinvigorate and sustain their respective religions against sheer emotionalism, self-centredness, and unbecoming idiosyncrasies on the part of individuals, and the dullness of some repetitive ritualistic practices, verbose and intolerant dogmatic assertions, and the spirit-enslaving structures on the part of institutionalized religions; in fact, they finally turn out to be a real shot in the arm that is ever in demand for quickening and renewing the religious dimension of human beings belonging to a variety of religious traditions.

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[3] Friedrich von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion as Studied in St. Catherine of Genoa and Her Friends*, 2nd ed., 2 vols., London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1923, 1:51-53.

Although there are a lot of sense-related practices within religions, these practices by themselves are unable to lead a seeker to an abiding experience of the Ultimate. These practices have value only insofar as they are symbolic in evoking an initial and intermittent understanding and experience of the Ultimate, which could be further enriched and strengthened by an ongoing practice of various methods (mostly related to the structural and dogmatic practices). A lasting and abiding experience of the Ultimate could be availed at this level by going beyond rational frameworks and sense-bound experiences: it requires an inward turn so as to identify the inner or spiritual meaning. It calls for transcendence over the sensual and peripheral meaning and reach of those methods (including sacred scriptures, ritualistic observances, etc.) to the mystical, which, according to every religion, has a prime of place:

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[4] I have no intention to downplay the thesis of von Hügel, which I am sure presents a right perspective. However, my attempt here is to highlight the importance of the experiential or mystical over the others, as both the organizational (matters pertaining to the structural aspects, such as church building, hierarchy, community, rituals, etc.) and doctrinal (those aspects related to the argumentative dimensions, such as creed, speculative treatises on the faith content, etc.) elements can receive their inner strength only from the experiential, which to my mind is more foundational than the others.

> … the mystical belongs to the very essence of every religion, even though that essence usually contains other elements as well. Not only does it occasionally take a complete hold of some, but, more importantly, it shapes and informs, inspires and renews, all religious activity, whether it be ritual, moral, or theoretical. Without some share of spiritual experience religion withers away in sterile ritualism, arid moralism, or theological intellectualism... The same power which overwhelms some exerts an active, though often barely conscious momentum on all genuine religious endeavours. Each religious man and woman at times feels the gentle urge to visit, or, more correctly, to allow himself or herself to be visited by, a spiritual power that allures him or her with strange fascination…[5]

For a person, belonging to theistic tradition especially, experiencing the essence of his or her religion and being a mystic constitute an ongoing process, an unending pilgrimage in faith, a sojourn in love and trust in God. As Underhill puts it, a mystic is one "in whom the transcendental consciousness can dominate the normal consciousness, and who has definitely surrendered himself to the embrace of Reality."[6]

Can this state of existence be achieved by the normal course of academic or religious discipline? Are there any specific methods employed to acquire mystical experience? Mysticism claims to know the *unknowable* without any recourse to intellectual dialectics, as that which it finally attains is beyond the terrains that the thoughts and words can ever attain. Academic disciplining and initiation into various religious practices (both remaining at the level of human thought and action), though found to have aided many a mystic in attaining their close encounters with the Absolute, neither of them is said to enjoy any privileged position in facilitating mystical experience; in fact, most consider them to be of any value only at the preparatory states. As it is asserted by *Theologia Germanica*, "let no one suppose that we may attain to this true light and perfect knowledge … by hearsay, or by reading and study, nor yet by high skill and great learning."[7] "An Epistle of Discretion," attributed to the author of "The Cloud of Unknowing," captures this squarely:

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[5] Louis Dupre, "General Introduction," in Louis Dupre and James A. Wiseman, *Light from Light: An Anthology of Christian Mysticism*, New York: Paulist Press, 1988, 6-7.

[6] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: The Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness*, Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006, 75.

> For silence is not God, nor speaking is not God; fasting is not God; nor eating is not God; loneliness is not God nor company is not God; nor yet any of all the other two such quantities, He is hid between them, and may not be found by any work of thy soul, but all only by love of thine heart. He may not be known by reason, He may not be gotten by thought, nor concluded by understanding; but he may be loved and chosen with the true lovely will of thine heart… Such a blind shot with the sharp dart of longing love may never fail of the prick, the which is God.[8]

What is essential in this regard, therefore, is orienting oneself totally and generously towards the Real by cultivating an open perspective motivated by an attitude of love and communion towards every being, living and non-living. Without denying the possibility of an initial divine initiative, as it is believed by many theistic religions, I would emphasize a personal quest on the part of individual seekers that would ultimately facilitate mystical experiences. Indeed, it calls for an opening of the whole person unrestrictedly to the Ultimate in love and simplicity.

Although Masters belonging to various mystical schools list a multitude of methods, no single method could be earmarked as *the* method *par excellence*. Every method seems to contribute its might; but no single method seems to finally doctor such an ultimate experience. The reason is, all the methods that are available to us are mediated through logical reasoning and an experience already conveyed through the linguistic categories that we normally employ for communication. We can understand their utter inability to communicate an experience that far outgrows the categories we have mastered. A difficulty that many face in admitting mystical experiences and their claims as intelligible is the incompatibility between our ordinary (logical) reasoning and the experiences of many mystics. It is claimed by almost all scholars on mysticism that there is a "huge disparity" or a "great gulf" between an intense experience of the Ultimate (accessible exclusively to the mystics[9]) and the available categories (used in the context of our day-to-day experiences) provided by any linguistic environment.[10] The mystics are said to be at a loss to find the right expressions that would correspond to a personal experience intensely felt within their deeper selves. For, any access to the Divine, as Thomas Aquinas has categorically underlined, needs a transcendental approach due to its very nature: "The divine essence is beyond description, containing to a transcendent degree any [*sic*] perfection that can be described or understood by the created mind. This could not be represented by any created likeness since every created form is determinately this rather than that, whether it be wisdom, power, existence itself or anything else."[11] Therefore, use of symbols becomes an essential element in 'suggesting' an approximation of the transcendental experience encountered by the mystics. Even these symbols can be employed only at the level of logical reasoning and categories of this world. This would curtail the value of the symbolic expressions to a great extent. Moreover, the expressions that they finally use, as considered opportune and proper, will be capable of providing only a partial glimpse into the core of a personal experience, making any verification of the same all the more difficult or even impossible.

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[7] *Theologia Germanica*, XIX, cited in Underhill, *Mysticism*, 83.

[8] Cited in Underhill, *Mysticism*, 85.

[9] Or else, whoever attains this ultimate experience is categorized as mystic.

The role of religion in facilitating mystical experience is crucial. As most religions are anchored on one or the other foundational experience, and are expected to provide the avenues for more such experiences for those who subscribe to their views and ways of life, they are bound to be facilitators of personal religious experience ideally culminating in a lasting encounter with the Ultimate and the resulting transformed everyday life. Everything that finds a place in an organized or unorganized religion must be tuned in for this primary task. Moreover, a failure in it would defeat its very purpose, and would create a situation of absolutizing the *unabsolutizables*. A believer who is capable of distinguishing between the essentials and the non-essentials and of accepting them wholeheartedly will definitely be able to soar high in religious experience without losing the firm foundations in radical faith.

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[10] Consider, for example, a passage from John of the Cross: "In order to arrive at possessing everything, desire to possess nothing; In order to arrive at being everything, desire to be nothing; In order to arrive at knowing everything, desire to know nothing." *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, I.13,11.

[11] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q.12,a.2,c.

It is, however, sad to note that many religionists, and many contemporary religious leaders and leading movements tend to block proper religious experience in the name of providing the ultimate religious experience. This is found in almost all religions and different religious movements: from the New Age Movements to the Westernized Indian Gurus and Matajis, from modern cult-worship to black magic, and from the noisy Charismatic mass movements to the silent meditations practised in Indian Ashrams. Most of them function by a sheer reference to a traditional pattern that has been accepted against the backdrop of historical situations and practices:

> … [Teaching] oral and meditative prayer, a certain moral behaviour, and social commitment … are [*sic*] not much more than the grammar school of a religion, and so many … remain stuck in an infantile state. When they grow up, they drop the childish forms without having learned a grown-up form of prayer. That is how things are in almost all religions. In Buddhism and Hinduism, too, most believers never get past a very simple form. Thus … all religions are only on the way towards outgrowing a childish notion of the self and growing into an adult understanding.[12]

That is, none of these religious movements tends to let individuals and communities to go beyond what they are capable of offering in a limited fashion,[13] so as to let these seekers have an original, firsthand, and ultimate religious experience – an experience that would enrich the life of individuals and communities by breaking open new religious horizons, an experience that would let the religions revitalize themselves by siphoning spiritual energy out of the Ultimate Spiritual Fountain.

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[12] Willigies Jäger, *Search for the Meaning of Life: Essays and Reflections on the Mystical Experience*, Liguori: Liguori Publications, 75.

[13] Without denying the positive contributions that religions make in leading believers towards the ultimate goal, scholars are articulate on the possible dangers lurking behind these same religions, if they were to assume more importance than what they are supposed to represent: "Religion may be compared to a glass window. It remains dark unless it is lit from behind. The light itself is not visible, but in the window of religion it takes on a structure and becomes comprehensible to everyone. Although religion often tends to bind its followers to the structures of the window, the ultimate thing is not the window but the light that shines behind it. Only those who see the light of God behind all the structures can realize the meaning and goal of religion. The danger is that symbols and images of God will obscure rather than illuminate the reality they are supposed to shed light on." Jäger, *Search for the Meaning of Life*, 75.

Opening new avenues within religious horizons is in itself a fascinating and welcome development that mystics are able to initiate, though some of their revolutionary moves are approached with suspicion by others. It is natural that the latter are unable to accept the claims of the former, especially on two counts: (1) the content of mystics' experiences is alien to others, as they have had no access to the ultimate levels of religious existence; (2) the approximate expressions that the mystics finally use tend to be disturbing the status quo, which is far more comfortable to an ordinary believer and all those who want to restrain religion to levels of the ordinary and the conventional. However, the intensity of an experience is said to force the mystics to be different and, sometimes, even to make pronouncements that bring them into conflict with others, especially those who are the guardians of institutional religions. As Neumann puts it, "The authentic basic experience of the Numinous cannot avoid being anticonventional, anticollective, and antidogmatic because it is a new experience of the Numinous."[14] It is natural, therefore, that many of them have had bitter confrontations with religious authorities, and were repeatedly persecuted, condemned, and sometimes even executed. However, here we must take note of one interesting factor: many who had partaken in the intense experience of the Ultimate never gave up their stance even in the face of the horrendous violence that they had to endure in their own persons. For, they were so powerfully gripped by the new vision they had attained that they became staunch defenders of their faith experience against any power or persecution. Although these dynamics apparently create an atmosphere of unbecoming negativity, it is heartening to note that, ultimately, the confrontations the mystics initiate turn out to be positive by promoting renewal within those religions which, many a time, initially oppose the pronouncements and practices of the mystics. So, finally, indirectly at least, the new horizons unveiled by the visions of the mystics provide acceptable novel patterns for a renewed religious life.

> ... Mystics are sometimes heretics (M. Stöber, "Constructivist Epistemologies of Mysticism," 112), but this heresy commonly

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[14] Ernst Neumann, *Kulturentwicklung und Religion*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1981.

> pushes the boundaries of the stagnant metaphysics of a tradition, rather than denying that tradition. These heretics are radical in the true sense of the word: they go to the root of the tradition, to recover it. This is a much better reason. At least it deals with the convergence between theology and experience within a tradition.[15]

All these indicate that mystical experience, though initially doubted and resisted, is a much needed positive event in the ongoing life of religions, and that is an added reason for admitting mysticism.

Genuine response on the part of mystics is said to include a yearning within them to integrate active and contemplative strands of religious commitment, enabling them and others to see the importance of both and at the same time the dangers of exclusively stressing any one of them. Although the mystics may not involve themselves in the affairs of the world as others would expect them to do, they are said to evolve an integral approach within which they try to synthesize active dimensions with the equally important contemplative strands, as per a logic emerging from their deeper religious experience. The value of this logic may be tested in terms of their ability to delicately balance every aspect of their lives, and in their availability to their fellow beings.

Along these lines, another reason for questioning the rationale of mysticism is its 'other-worldly' character. In common parlance a mystic is one who is unattached and unconcerned about what happens in and around this world, as if they are beings dropped from 'above', from a transcendental plane altogether. Although our discussion in the previous paragraphs would indicate that every religious person must desire to be a mystic – as that would enable him or her to partake in a foundational religious experience – and must experience lasting moments of intimacy with the Ultimate, being a mystic cannot be equated with a call for retreating from the ordinary living milieu and active obligations that every human being has to fulfil. "A spiritual path that does not lead to everyday life and one's fellow men and women is a wrong path."[16] Mystical experience, being a call to self-realization and authenticity, should take into account the situations of real life, enabling those who appropriate such experiences to respond to the ups and downs that an ordinary human being faces on a daily basis.[17] That is, being a mystic does not mean that one should flee from cares and worries of daily living, but must be equipped to face them squarely and to respond to them from a genuinely religious perspective, which may not come in so handy with others who remain at the periphery of any religious ethos. A new and foundational experience of the Ultimate should be capable of radically transforming mystics, whereby they will be able to bridge the gap between an active involvement in the affairs of the world and a commitment that calls for a personal detachment from the same affairs. In the case of mystics, the former does not result from any motive of personal glory or fulfilment; nor does the latter result from a reluctance or disinclination that they feel in themselves.

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[15] Bruce Janz, "Mysticism and Understanding: Steven Katz and His Critics," *Studies in Religion* 24, 1 (1995), 85.

[16] Jäger, *Search for the Meaning of Life*, 48.

Taking the intricacies involved in analysing and understanding the inner dynamics of mysticism, this issue of the *Journal of Dharma* makes an attempt to look closely at the reality of mysticism, with a special intent to articulate its 'rationality'. The first entry by Sebastian Painadath, "Mysticism, the Depth-Dimension of Spirituality," begins with the understanding that "mysticism is basically sensitivity to the mystery of being." Search for the Being, however, shall not be a limited endeavour of reaching any one or other form of the Divine; instead, it must constantly strive for encountering that which is nameless and formless. As he puts it, "a genuine spiritual seeker has to go beyond God to the God-beyond-God" through a process of self-critique of all experiences facilitated by mind and intellect. This process of 'God realization' is usually facilitated through religions – as attempts to articulate spiritual experiences of believers (through creed, cult, code, and community), although they are equally capable of either in guiding or blocking their way towards God. The author identifies four categories of persons who are instrumental in this regard: theologians, priests, teachers of law, and leaders of community. By providing a balanced view on the contributions that these *office bearers* make, and a brief but pointed critique on the negative developments (i.e., getting uprooted from spirituality altogether) that they may initiate, the author situates the positive role of mystics: to "challenge all religious functionaries to move constantly towards the ever Beyond: *Deus semper major*" and to promote justice in the world at large. A religion that has lost the mystical, prophetic, and contemplative dimensions, according to him, is no more *religio*, as it can neither unite human life with the divine Ground of being, nor can it integrate human creativity with God's transforming work. It is in the context of this argument that we must realize the value of his assertion: "Religion devoid of the wellsprings of mystical experience is sterile; religion without prophetic dynamism is irrelevant."

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[17] Underhill insists that the life of mystics must be closely related to the affairs of ordinary people. She writes: "… for unless the history of the mystics can touch and light up some part of this normal experience, take its place in the general history of man, contribute something towards our understanding of his nature and destiny, its interest for us can never be more than remote, academic, and unreal." *Mysticism*, 444.

"Meaning and Mystery of Reality" by V. F. Vineeth narrates some important aspects of a personal search for wisdom 'in' and 'beyond' reason. The article insists on two different understandings of reality, arrived at by reason and faith, as "what the soul seeks in the divine wisdom is totally different from that which is sought by the mind." While the mind may go after meaning, it is faith that continues the search into the untold dimensions of reality. It is claimed that "the soul, while on earth, always remains in a deep thirst for the not-yet-revealed," especially because "the not-yet-known always exceeds what is already known" by reason. According to him, "faith is a different way of *knowing*." However, he is calling for an abandonment or opposition of reason, but its integration with faith, and to restrict reason to be at the disposal of faith, through which the new wisdom can be received. The reason for such a move is clear: "Reason does not have answer for everything, simply because Reality transcends reason." Hence, it is on the verge of a blissful comprehension that we can attain true wisdom by encountering ourselves and the Divine Reality.

Against the background of repeated failures among researchers to come out with a proper rational understanding of mysticism, George Karuvelil, in his article "Rationality of Mysticism: A Methodological Proposal," proposes a complex method that incorporates insights from various authors and methods. Delving deep into the intricate issues involved in an epistemic understanding of the mystical experience by way of analysing the contributions of various classical authors such as William James, Arthur Deikman, Wittgenstein, Katz, and Proudfoot, the author opines that we "need to adopt a more complex methodology that incorporates religious sensibility of Schleiermacher, the descriptive fidelity of James, the philosophical insight of the Wittgensteinians, and the analytic acumen of Proudfoot." The new method has three essential components in (1) description, (2) interpretation and explanation and, finally, (3) a logical procedure of justification that is not content with coherence of interpretations and reflective equilibrium.

In "Crossing the Threshold of Reason," Kurian Perumpallikunnel challenges a general but wrong association of mysticism with parapsychology, spiritualism, clairvoyance, and mumbo jumbo, and many other accusations made by conservative rationalists and others that any human experience admissible must meet scientific standards. Setting his argument in terms of distinguishing human operations at the level of reasoning and experiencing, the author maintains that "'Head' has a tendency to shun everything that lacks logic as 'irrational,' while 'heart' has its own feeling and conclusions based on experiences and intuitions, which transcend intellectual reasoning that is merely based on known premises." Although "there is obviously something non-mental, non-logical, paradoxical, and unpredictable about mystical phenomena," he is categorical in the assertion that "it is not, therefore, irrational or antirational." He maintains that the experiences of the mystics as a whole, though unverifiable, intangible, and incommunicable, would be evident in their lives, and could be repeated universally. What, in fact, we need are "the 'tools' to access and assess both the realms of rationality and intuition, tools that could describe the seemingly polar facets of consciousness, the rational and intuitive modes of [human] operation." As "science has not yet developed instruments to measure and interpret the experiences a person may be undergoing," it is not right on its part to reject or distort a set of mystical experiences communicated through signs and symbols that may not fit into the already accepted patterns or categories. Despite arriving at this conclusion, the author dares to maintain that any knowledge we acquire must be submitted to "a thorough rational analysis to make it fully and truly human."

In all, there is a consensus among the contributors to this volume on the unique value of mysticism. Moreover, emphasis is also laid on the capability of mysticism to reach those inner recesses of reality that no other human science is capable of penetrating (as all of them are designed within the parameters of logical reasoning). They decry the inability of logical reasoning in deciphering and evaluating the truth of mystical experience. The new or transformed consciousness that emerges in a mystic is enabled to employ a set of new rules which are trans-natural and trans-rational in character. However, it does not mean, therefore, that mystical experience is an "isolated vision," or a "fugitive glimpse of reality," but provides "a complete system of life carrying its own guarantees and obligations."[18] This system enables the mystic to adopt a unitive approach to the religious reality, which enables him or her to anchor in one or other religious tradition, but without being enslaved by its structural patterns, and to delve deeper and to go beyond the periphery of religious existence by a person-to-person mode of experiential encounter.

Rationality and mysticism need not be at loggerheads; the apparent difference – which is over-emphasized in many cases – between them mostly results from the methods they adopt, and the incompatibility of the 'logics' employed. We are yet to evolve a common tool with which the truth of both our natural sciences and mystical sciences could be ascertained.

Just as rationality is a capability that human beings are endowed with, mysticism is another capacity that is integral to, but latent within the human race, though very seldom it comes to its fruition. It is an ability to perceive the transcendental reality, which cannot be usually done by employing our ordinary reasoning capacity. Even though many of us do not bother to activate the mystical powers within us, the accomplishments of those who have crossed the threshold of reason to the transcendental world are also ours. Appropriating such an experience, however, calls for openness on the part of every human being, a yearning to personally encounter the Ultimate Reality. The ever vibrant and ongoing quest for the Ultimate that reverberates in the time-tested chant of the Upaniṣads continues to echo in our being:

Asato mā sat gamaya
Tamaso mā jyotir gamaya
Mṛtyor mā amṛtam gamaya! (Bṛh. Up. I.3.28).

Saju Chackalackal
Chief Editor, JD

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[18] Underhill, *Mysticism*, 76.

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MYSTICISM,
THE DEPTH-DIMENSION OF SPIRITUALITY

Sebastian Painadath◆

1. Introduction

The word mysticism is derived from the Greek verb *muein*, which means to hide, to conceal, or to close the eyes. The word mystery too comes from the same verb. Mysticism is, therefore, basically sensitivity to the mystery of being. A mystic is gripped by an intense awareness of the mystery of the noumenon behind the phenomenon. The search takes the seeker from the visible to the invisible, from form to the formless, from multiplicity to unity, from diversity to the One (to *hon*, *ekam*). Ultimately, it is a search for the Beyond, for the Absolute, for the unifying power: for the *Ṛta*, for the Tao, for the Brahman, for the *Dhamma*, for the Divine. The unfathomability and incomprehensibility of the Divine is the horizon of any authentic mystical experience. Hence, the mystic draws life from contemplative silence before the abysmal depth of God.[1]

Since the Divine is beyond human understanding, there is an element of mysticism in every authentic spiritual experience. Any symbolic perception of the Transcendent is limited by time and space and, hence, there should be an abiding mystical critique that takes the human mind beyond all names and forms. A genuine spiritual seeker has to go beyond God to the God-beyond-God. Devoid of the critique of the mystic, religion runs the risk of idolisation and ritualization.[2] Mystical experience unfolds the depth dimension of spirituality and, hence, offers a corrective to any religious perception.

This is not a process that takes place merely outside the person, but deep within. In every human person there are two faculties of perception:

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[1] Raimundo Panikkar, *The Silence of God*, New York: Orbis Books, 1989, 164-176.

[2] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Chicago: Harper and Row, 1963, 3:98-106.

the extrovert mind (*manaḥ*) and the introspective intellect (*buddhi*). Mind is the organ of reasoning while *buddhi* is the faculty of intuition. Mystical experience unfolds in and through the *buddhi*.

"Beyond the senses there is the mind (*manah*)
Beyond the mind there is the intuitive organ (*buddhi*)
Beyond the *buddhi* is the inner self (*ātman*)" (Katha Up. 3,10).

2. The Mind (*manaḥ*) as the Organ of Reflection

It is the mind that takes a person to the world outside. One encounters the *thou* or an *it*, persons or things. Within the mind there is a twofold activity: to know and to will. Hence, the mind is full of thoughts and feelings. Mind can understand something only in as much as the latter is objectified. Mind operates in a subject-object structure. Even if one is trying to understand oneself, one has to objectify oneself: I have to look at myself, reflect on myself, and take myself in the hand. Mind objectifies everything including God. In this extrovert process of the mind a sense of I-and-mine feeling (*ahaṁkāra*) evolves. This sense of the ego (*ahaṁ*) is something constitutive of the human mind. Everyone needs a healthy sense of the ego to accept oneself and to affirm oneself in relation to persons and things. It is through the ego that one articulates one's subjectivity. *I* encounter the *thou* and return to myself enriched by the *thou*. Through the *thou* I become truly *I*. The analytical, imaginative, and reasoning operations happen in the mind. All socio-cultural-religious activities take place at this upper level of mental perception.

The conscious mind has also a sub-conscious realm (*chittaḥ*). Inner-psychic factors constantly control the activities of the mind. This inner *womb* of the psyche is shaped by one's own biography and also through the evolutionary process of humanity. Several unexpressed emotions and unarticulated thoughts are preserved within this inner recess. Memories of the past – personal as well as collective – are stored up in this inner warehouse. Some of these elements surface in dreams. Several factors of the collective unconscious find expression in myths and legends. In them we recognise the collective archetypes emerging from the deeper realms of our psyche. Introspection into the psyche will make us realize that we are not just isolated individuals, but deeply related to one another: we are parts of an evolving totality. We are not just a few years old as the mind tells us, but heirs of the entire evolutionary process of humanity. This is the basic insight contained in the conviction on rebirth, prevalent in the tribal and Indian religions.

3. The Intellect (*buddhi*) as the Faculty of Mystical Perception

When one dives into the levels below the mind one is brought to a deeper level of consciousness, which may be called transcendental perception or mystical consciousness.[3] Some like to call it meta-consciousness or super-consciousness. It is at this level that one encounters the mystery of being, one experiences one's true self in union with the absolute Self. Here one realises one's true identity in harmony with the totality of reality. One is brought to the boundary of individual consciousness and experiences the infinite horizons unto which one is existentially open. This is entry to the inner cave of the heart. The spiritual faculty by which this introspection takes place may be called the *intellect*, in the original sense of the term: *intus legere*, to read into. This is what the Indian sages called the *buddhi*, the intuitive faculty of perception. Mystics and sages of all times and religions speak of this inner spiritual organ. Christian mystics describe it as *sensus mysticus*, *scintilla animae*, *apex mentis, the inner eye* (Augustine), *the third eye (*Richard von St. Victor), or *Seelenfünklein* (Meister Eckhart). Jesus spoke of it as the inner *eye*, the *light within* (Lk. 11:34-36). In Indian traditions the symbols for *buddhi* are *inner eye* (*Gītā*), *inner light* (*Upaniṣads*), and *lotus of the heart* (Vedas). *Buddhi* is like the flame that enlightens the inner realms of the person, the eye that enables the in*sight* into the divine reality. The light of the *buddhi* shone through the consciousness of Siddhārtha and, thus, he became the Buddha, the enlightened one.

"*Buddhi* as the highest evolute of nature and, therefore, the nearest to the immortal self is single, simple, one, because its true function is contemplation of the Eternal. As man's highest faculty it is directed towards God."[4] "The inner light of the *buddhi* unifies perception."[5] "*Buddhi* is the point at which the human mind is open to the divine light. It is also the point of unification of the personality. It is at this point that we become fully human. If the *buddhi* turns towards the light, it is illumined by the divine light and transmits the light to the *manaḥ* and the senses. But if the *buddhi* is turned away from the light then the mind is darkened and the personality is divided."[6] "The so called contradictions are such only at the mental level, but are in reality complementary aspects of the Overmind (intuition: truth is hidden beyond words and concepts)."[7]

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[3] S. Painadath, *The Spiritual Journey*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2005, 7-15.

[4] Zaehner, *Bhagavad Gita*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1969, 142-3

[5] Sankara, *Gitabhashya*, 4.3.7, Madras: Samata, 1979.

4. Mind and *Buddhi*

There is, therefore, a definite distinction between the two types of perception, the mind at the upper level of understanding and that of the *buddhi* at the deeper level of intuition:

- Mind (*mens*) operates within the subject-object polarity: I encounter the thou/it. *Buddhi* (*intellectus*) transcends this polarity: I and thou/it merge into a unity of transcendental consciousness.
- Mind objectifies everything and analyses reality in its individuality and diversity. *Buddhi* enters into the depth of reality (*intus ire*, intuition) by uniting it with the perceiving subject.
- Through the mind one is driven to the fascinating diversity of things while the *buddhi* delves into the mystery of the unity of reality.
- Mind looks at the structures and qualities of the world, while *buddhi* contemplates the axis of the world.
- Mind pursues the logic of reality; *buddhi* explores the mystique of reality. "How can *He* be known, by whom all this is made known?" This is the constant search of the *buddhi* (Brh. Up. 4.5.15).
- Mind speculates on the horizontal level and acquires a conceptual knowledge (*vijñāna*) of persons and things, while *buddhi* contemplates reality in its abysmal depth dimension and attains the intuitive wisdom (*jñāna*).
- Through the mind (*ratio*) one reaches objective understanding and communicates it by way of information; in the *buddhi* (*intuitio*), however, one is graced with intuitive perception that leads to transformation.
- Mind operates on the principle of duality and classifies everything according to structures and qualities; *buddhi* unfolds on the principle of unity and contemplates everything in terms of universal interrelatedness (*dharma*/plan of God).

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[6] Bede Griffiths, *Marriage of East and West*, London: Collins, 1982, 71.3.

[7] Jules Monchanin, "The Christian Approach to Hinduism," *Indian Missiological Bulletin*, June 1952.

- Mental understanding is conditioned by one's standpoint and, hence, it is always fragmentary; through the intuitive entry into the depth of reality, however, a new consciousness arises in which one perceives reality holistically.
- Mind deals with the objects conveyed through the external or internal senses. *Buddhi* takes one's consciousness to the *sacred space* within.

> "Revealed and yet dwelling hidden in the cave,
> is that which is called the great Ātman.
> Whatever moves and breathes and blinks
> is fixed therein. Know this as being
> and also non-being, the passion of all hearts,
> Transcending all knowledge.
> Yet that is to be known – know that" (Muṇd. Up. 2.2.1).

5. The Inner Divine Space

When the inner light shines forth in the *buddhi*, when the inner eye is opened, one looks into the inner recess of reality. What does one see there? Nothing (*sūnya*)! Yet this is fullness (*pūrṇa*). This is an ineffable experience of entry into the sacred space within. Mystics and sages of all religions struggle to describe this space by using diverse spatial symbols: *cave of the heart* (Muṇd. Up. 2.2.1), *space of the heart* (Brh. Up. 4.4.22), *city of the Divine* (Chaṇd. Up. 8.1.1), *inner garden* of the soul (Sufis), *interior castle* (Theresa of Avila), *inner space of the spirit* (Meister Eckhart), etc. Jesus spoke of it as the *inner room* in which one truly experiences the Divine: "When you pray, go into your inner room (*tamieion*), shut yourself in and pray to your Father who is in the secret place" (Mt. 6:6). When he taught his disciples to invoke God as *Our Father in the heavens* (*en tois ouranois*), did he not mean the infinite divine space within?

The mystical experience is made at the level of the *buddhi*, but the expression of that through symbols takes place at the level of the mind. *Buddhi* is instospective, but the mind is extrovert. Hence, there is a constant struggle to express the ineffable experience through the symbols and concepts which evolve in the mental realm. This is the struggle that every mystic goes through. In fact, this is a struggle that is at the core of any authentic spiritual experience. The inner dialectics of this struggle have to be kept alive as a safeguard against the idolisation of the Divine and consequent instrumentalisation of religion.

Christian mystics constantly point to the limitation of symbols and language in attaining and expressing the experience of the Beyond. "If you know God, it is not God!"[8] In the entry of Moses into the darkness of the mountain Gregory of Nyssa finds the entry of the human into the "divine darkness."[9] Dionysius the Areopagite demands that the praying person has to "enter into the mysterious darkness of a holy ignorance."[10] John Chrysostom invites Christians to "invoke the Divine as the inexpressible, incomprehensible, invisible, and unknown reality."[11] For John Damascene too the Divine is primarily "infinite and incomprehensible."[12] Evagrius of Pontus says about prayer: "When you pray let your intelligence take on the impression of no form; go immaterially to the Immaterial, and then you will understand what it is."[13] "One has to become God*less* in order to experience God."[14] In *The Cloud of Unknowing*[15] there is a constant insistence on the need of putting the reason into the cloud, so that the divine Light from Beyond enlightens the intellect. For John of the Cross, an experience of the "dark night of the soul" is an inevitable moment in the soul's ascent to God. Without sensitivity to the apophatic dimension there can be no affirmation of the kataphatic forms.

In the Indian spiritual heritage one makes consistently a distinction between the experience of the formless Divine (*nirguṇa*) and the expression through concrete forms of God (*saguṇa*). The Upaniṣadic masters relentlessly emphasise that the Divine is beyond all comprehension. "There the eye does not reach, nor speech, nor mind: we do not know it nor do we know how to teach it. Indeed, it is other than the known, and also beyond the unknown. Thus, have we heard from the ancient sages who have spoken about it" (Kena Up. 1.3-4; 2.1.3; Tait Up. 2.4; Muṇd Up. 2.2.1). This being the case, the only way to reach out to the divine mystery is the way of negation: *neti... neti...* (not this, not this) (Brh. Up. 4.5.15). The Upaniṣadic sages constantly strive to transcend the mind, to go beyond the realm of words and symbols. "That which is not thought by the mind, but by which the mind thinks, that is Brahman; not what people worship here. That which is not expressed through speech, but by which speech is expressed, that is Brahman; not what people worship here" (Kena Up. 1.5-6). The inner reality of the Divine is, therefore, an incomprehensible mystery for the human mind. It is "ungraspable, unperceivable, indescribable" (Muṇd. Up. 1.1.6), "formless eternal silence" (Chaṇd. Up. 3.15), "subtler than the subtlest" (Swet. Up. 4.14). If asked what is its form, one should answer: "Its form is formlessness" (Swet. Up. 4.19)

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[8] Augustine, in Minge, *Patrologia Latina*, 8.663.

[9] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, 376c-377a trans. A. J. Malherbe, New York: Paulist Press, 1978.

[10] Dionysius the Areopagite, *Mystical Theology*, 1,3, New York: Paulist Press, 1981.

[11] John Chrysostom, *Incomprehensibility of God*, in Minge, *Patrologia Graeca*, 3,166.

[12]]John Damascene, in Minge, *Patrologia Graeca*, 94,800b.

[13] Evagrius of Pontus, *Chapters on Prayer*, 117, in Ruhback ed., *Christliche Mystik*, Munich: C. H. Beck, 1989.

[14] Meister Eckhart, *Beati paupers* in D. Mieth ed., *Meister Eckhart, Gotteserfahrung und Weg in die Welt*, Freiburg: Walter, 151.

[15] Unknown English Author, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. James Walsh, New York: Paulist Press, 1981.

Within the inner divine space how does one experience the relationship between the human and the Divine? Mystics of all spiritual traditions basically point to three dimensions of the experience of the relationship between the human self (and the cosmos) and the divine Self: (1) the human is different from the Divine (*dwaita/creatureliness*), (2) the human is a particle of the Divine (*viśiṣtādvaita/participation*), and (3) the human is ultimately one with the Divine (*advaita/mystical union*).

Basically, one should be open to all these three aspects of experience, for one cannot pre-programme how the Divine directly deals with the human. These are, however, the three basic types of mysticism found in the traditions of world religions. All these three can be found, more or less, in all religious traditions. However, an insistence on the creatureliness of the human is seen in the Islamic heritage, an emphasis on the participation of the human in divine life is found in Christian faith, and the oneness of the human with the Divine is upheld in Vedānta Hinduism. If analysed at the mental level one may locate a lot of dissonance among these three streams of religious heritage; but if one tries to perceive the basic concern in the light of the *buddhi* one would discover harmony among these three streams. The three dimensions of mystical experience are, in fact, complementary and, hence, these three religious *types* could also be taken as complementary. Through an open and creative dialogue of religions one or the other dimension of mystical experience is alerted in the religious seeker. The inner divine space is the actual meeting point of religions.

An integrated spiritual process demands both an inter-personal encounter with the divine Lord at the mind level and a transpersonal experience of the divine Spirit in the *buddhi* realm. Out of the inter-personal encounter evolves the response of devotional self-surrender (*bhakti*) and out of the experience of oneness comes unitive contemplation (*jñāna*). Through the integration of both, one gets engaged in "works (*karma*) for the welfare of the world." The basic dynamics of a liberative spirituality is described in the Christian axiom, *be a contemplative in action*[16] and in the Indian aphorism, *being united with the Divine get involved in your works* (*Gītā*, 2:48). Thus, genuine mystical experience becomes an inner force to get engaged in social transformation. Solitude leads to solidarity, contemplation motivates action, mystical introspection enlightens prophetic commitment to justice, and *yoga* integrates *karma*. Mystical experience is not escapism from the world but a radical insertion into the world. The Divine that one intuits in the inner space is the Divine that one perceives in every bit of reality outside. For the mystic the world is the temple of God (1Cor. 6:19), the earth is the body of the Lord (*Gītā*, 13:2), and every human person is a manifestation of the Lord (*Bhāgavataṁ*, 11:5). The mystic sees God in all things and all things in God (*Gītā*, 6:30).

6. Mysticism and Religion

In order to locate the place of mysticism in the evolution of religion it may be helpful to make a distinction between spirituality and religion.

Spirituality, as the term indicates, is the experience of the Spirit. It is the experience of being gripped by the dimension of the ultimate concern, of being grasped by the Divine, of being moved by God. However, the ultimate reality may not always and necessarily be experienced in the form of a personal God. Spirituality is basically the awareness of the mystery of life, the sense of the ultimate meaning and final goal in life. "We attain to the inward depths whenever we enter into our heart. God who probes the heart awaits us there. There we discern our proper destiny beneath the eyes of God" (Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes*, 14). Mystical experience is the depth dimension of spirituality. Mysticism awakens one to the *one* divine Light that enlightens the minds of all, to the *one* divine Spirit that guides the steps of all in life. The ultimate reality is, in fact, One (*ekam*, *unum*, *to hon*). Perceptions may vary, but the reality is one. "There is only one Truth/Reality, those who perceive it speak of in different ways. *Ekam sat, vipra bahudha vadanti* (Ṛg Veda 1.164.46). The presence of the one divine Spirit is brought to awareness in diverse ways. Spirituality with its mystical dimension has, therefore, a universal as well as a unitive significance.

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[16] Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, §230, in Luis J. Puhl, *The Spiritual Exercises*, Bombay: St. Paul, 1965.

Religion is the articulation of spirituality. The universal experience of spirituality finds expression in particular religions. The unitive consciousness of the divine Spirit unfolds itself in and through the diversity of religions. The underlying sense of the mystery is made manifest through concrete forms of religions. Religion is the articulation of faith which is a concrete entry to spirituality. The dynamic relationship between divine revelation and human faith is mediated through symbols. The content of religion evolves from within the faith experience, but the format of religion comes from the cultural matrix because symbols are products of a culture. Hence, religion has a bipolar mode of existence. It mediates between the sacred and the secular aspects of life. Through religion one has access to the divine dimension of life which permeates the entire secular realm. Religion enables the believer to discover the transforming presence of the divine Spirit at the heart of the secular reality. "Religious traditions are expressions of the presence of God's Word and of the universal action of the divine Spirit."[17] In as much as symbols are ambivalent media of divine revelation, religion evolves within the factors of the ambiguities of culture. Religion can, therefore, guide a believer towards God; it may also block the way to the Divine.

In the process of the evolution of spirituality into a religion four areas emerge, in which the spiritual experience finds symbolic articulation: creed, cult, code, and community.[18] These are like the channels through which spirituality evolves into religion. Or, to use another imagery, these form the four corner pillars of the religious structure built on the hidden foundation of spirituality. A believing community needs these symbolic elements to articulate its faith, just as one needs a language in order to develop and communicate one's thoughts. Every language has its structural limitations, so too every religion. No creativity is possible without language, however limited it may be; no spirituality can unfold itself creatively without religion (or quasi-religion), however fragmentary it may be.

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[17] FABC, *Theological Consultation*, 1993, § 43, in G. Rosales, ed., *For All the Peoples of Asia*, FABC Statements, Manila: Claretian, 1997, 344.

[18] S. Painadath, *We are Co-pilgrims*, Delhi: ISPCK, 2005, 25-37.

With these elements religion inevitably takes the format of a social reality. Religion, thus, unfolds the spiritual dimension of the social fabric and cultural process of human life. Hence, it is necessary that these four areas of symbolic expression be authentically preserved and effectively communicated in a way that is meaningful to contemporary situation. For this, the believing community officially appoints persons who have the mission to preserve the symbols of faith, interpret them properly, and make the pristine spiritual experience available to the believers.

- Theologians are commissioned to interpret the contents of the credal system in a creative encounter between the primary experience and the contemporary situation.
- Priests are ordained to help the community members experience the transforming presence of the Divine through their participation in cultic performances and rituals.
- Teachers of law have the responsibility to explain ethical norms based on the pristine encounter and in response to the challenges of the times.
- Leaders of the community have the authority to guide the believers and to keep them together in harmony and collaboration.

These four groups of *office bearers* are needed in any organised religion for keeping the believers authentically rooted in the original spiritual experience, and for making them respond to the demands of contemporary society and culture. Through these four functions the spiritual community gets integrated into the social fabric of life. As spirituality expresses itself through a concrete religion, believers get incorporated to certain social structures and attuned to definite cultural expressions.

- The language of theology formulates concrete definitions which tend to be normative in articulating the faith experience.
- In the realm of rituals particular forms evolve and fix the symbolic expressions into pre-programmed rubrics.
- The interpretation of ethical norms gives rise to laws and regulations.

- Coherence in the religious community is guaranteed by certain structures of governance.

This is an inevitable sociological evolution: inevitable because religion is spirituality's articulation within the socio-cultural modes of life's self-creation. In this process of cultural articulation extrinsic elements infiltrate into the formation of religion. Political powers manipulate religious feelings in order to defend their power and privilege. Commercial agencies misuse religious expressions with a motive of profit. Cultural elite domesticate religious symbols to safeguard their vested interests. Religion, thus, tends to lose its rootedness in spirituality. Believers fail to keep alive the alertness to the Spirit that "blows where it wills." What are the consequences?

- Theological reflection loses its alertness and gets stagnated in a sort of dogmatism without being able to communicate an authentic God experience in the light of the pristine encounter; theology gets estranged from spirituality.
- Cultic expressions are devoid of the healing power of the symbols as they end up in sterile ritualism; cult does not draw life from contemplation.
- Interpretation of ethical norms fails to promote responsible freedom but adheres blindly to legalism, which, in turn, blocks the freedom of the spirit; law kills when there is no alertness to the Spirit.
- Social structures of community life get so much politicised that they succumb to a structuralism, which is insensitive to the "Spirit that speaks to the community" in ever new ways; a community is liberative only where there is communion with the Spirit.

With these negative developments religion, which has to be the authentic expression of spirituality, gets uprooted from spirituality. Symbols, which are actually meant to communicate the pristine experience of encounter with the Divine, lose their transparency and become more or less *idols*. Symbols open infinite horizons for growth in the Spirit; idols block this process by subjugating the Spirit to the ego, personal or collective. The constant tension between the transparency of religious symbols and the opaqueness of idols can be found in all the four areas of religious expression, theological, cultic, ethical, and social. This tension is, in fact, one of the basic dynamics of the historical evolution of all religions. Elitist Brahminism, imperial Christianity, royal Judaism, expansionist Islam, militant Sikkhism, and politicised Buddhism are phenomena in which a widespread idolisation of religion has taken place. Its impact can be found in various fundamentalist movements within those religions. However, in spite of the upsurge of fundamentalism, the grace of the primary experience of encounter is never totally lost! The Spirit of God does not disappear from the evolutionary paths of history. The Spirit, ever active in history, breaks down the walls and fences which human beings put up in order to divide the one world. The presence of the Spirit in history is an explosive presence: it explodes religious structures from within in order to transform them; it activates the integrative power of symbols in spite of the tendency towards idolisation. This breakthrough of the divine Spirit takes place in two directions: vertical and horizontal; it finds expression through two charisms: through mystics and prophets.

7. Critique of the Mystic

A mystic is a person gripped with an intense awareness of the mystery of the Divine. The unfathomability and incomprehensibility of the divine reality are the underlying dimensions of the mystic's experience. Mystics are critical of all symbols of the Divine, not denying their validity, but upholding their transparency and depth dimension. Consequently, they challenge all religious functionaries to move constantly towards the ever Beyond: *Deus semper major*.

- Theological search has to go beyond concepts and definitions, and explore the "the breadth and length and height and depth" (Eph. 3:18) of the transforming presence of God manifest in the original encounter; it evolves through a constant alertness to God's ongoing dialogue with humanity in all realms of life, in all religions of the world.
- Rituals can communicate the experience of the grace of God only if they are nourished by contemplative silence; it is in silence that the depth dimension of the symbols gets unfolded.
- Ethical directives are meant ultimately to make room for the *sacred space* in which the divine Spirit enters the lives of individuals; law is an aid to discern this Spirit within and around oneself.
- Community structures in a mystical perspective are meant to create a home for the believers to experience growth in the Spirit: they may

feel accepted and supported in a community that constantly listens to "what Spirit is saying to the community;" exploration with the Spirit is the dynamics of the community.

The mystic's critique restores in all these four areas of religious life the original meaning and function of symbols. His or her sensitivity to the absolute transcendence of the divine mystery together with an awareness of the radical immanence of divine grace is the channel through which the divine Spirit transforms the world of religious symbolism. A religion that has lost the mystical dimension is no more *religio*, for it cannot any more unite human life with the divine Ground of being.

8. Protest of the Prophet

Prophet is a person who feels the inner call to articulate God's Word in a concrete situation. The prophet is in a sense the mouthpiece of God and the spokesperson of the community as well *(nabi* = the one called; *prophetes* = the one who speaks before others). Prophets speak out of an intense experience of the demands of the Spirit "to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jer. 1:10). With this radical sensitivity to the transforming presence of God they proclaim the divine demand of justice in all realms of life. For prophets a religious symbol has meaning only insofar as it expresses the divine depth of human relations, the divine call for human solidarity, the divine concern for the poor. Hence, they criticize all forms of religious expression in relation to their primary motive: promotion of justice. They challenge all functionaries of religion to make integral human liberation their main concern.

- Theological reflection should always explore the ever-widening horizons of the work of the Spirit revealed in the primary encounter: theology works out the liberative potential of spirituality.
- Rituals have to alert the believers on the concrete demands of justice and inspire them to share their life with one another: the heart-beat of cult compassion.
- Laws are meant to help the believers respond to the demands of God's justice developing solidarity with one another and harmony with creation; to the God who manifests himself in the other is the prophetic motivation of law.

- Leaders of the community have a responsibility to discern and nourish charisms of believers in the process of participating creatively in the promotion of justice, the universal salvific work of the Spirit; concern for the poor is the hallmark of a spiritual community.

The prophetic critique restores in all these four areas of religious life the original meaning and function of symbols. The alertness to articulate the absolute transcendence of the divine plan and the sensitivity to the radical immanence of divine justice are channels through which the divine Spirit transforms the world of religious symbolism. A religion that has lost the prophetic dimension cannot any more be *religio*, for it does not integrate human creativity with God's transforming work.

9. Contemplation and Compassion

Every genuine mystic is a prophet, and every authentic prophet is a mystic. These are, in fact, two basic dimensions of a liberative spirituality. The mystic emerges with an inner enlightenment and teaches the seekers; the prophet comes out with an inner vocation and exhorts the believers. The mystic is enthused by the divine Light; the prophet is energized by the divine Word. The mystic is a seer; the prophet is a listener. The mystic speaks in a poetic language; the prophet preaches in a narrative style. The mystic inspires the seekers; the prophet exhorts the community. The mystic appears from a unitive awareness of the divine immanence in the silence of the heart; the prophet comes out of an encounter with the divine Lord in the struggles of history. The mystic admonishes out of contemplation; the prophet advocates compassion.

9. Conclusion

An unconditional alertness to the divine Spirit is the dynamic dimension of both mystics and prophets. Hence, the spiritual liberative undercurrents of spirituality are manifest in and through them. Religion devoid of the wellsprings of mystical experience is sterile; religion without prophetic dynamism is irrelevant. The critique of mystics and prophets is disturbing for theologians, priests, teachers of law, and leaders of the community. It makes them feel threatened for fear of losing the basis on which they build up their security structures of thought and action. The officials of an established religious community have the anxiety that the mystics and prophets would explode the edifices of their power and authority. The mystic's demand to relativize the traditional categories in terms of the unfathomable mystery of the Divine disturbs them. The prophet's challenge to relativize the religious forms in view of promotion of divine justice too upsets them. Consequently, mystics are silenced and prophets are persecuted. This tension has been a constant phenomenon in the history of all religions. It is also a tension that is being felt in the personal religious life any true seeker. An acquaintance with mystics and prophets will convert this tension to a creative struggle, which is actually the struggle of the divine Spirit within the ambiguities of religion. Openness to mystical experience and alertness to prophetic critique found in other religions invite a deeply genuine inter-religious dialogue. In fact, religions meet at the level of mysticism and prophecy.

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MEANING AND MYSTERY OF REALITY

My Search for Wisdom 'In' and 'Beyond' Reason

V. F. Vineeth♦

1. Introduction

Śvetaketu was young and energetic. He had just returned home after his training in the *Vedas.* Proud and puffed up, he developed a tendency to look down upon others and considered himself as educated with better reasoning, not subject to superstitions and idiosyncrasies. His father, Uddhalaka Āruṇi, a venerable master, very much admired by the seekers of sacred wisdom, noticed this unhealthy orientation in his son, called him to give him a lesson. He asked: "Do you know that 'by which the unhearable becomes heard, unperceivable becomes perceived, the unknowable becomes known?'" (Chaṇd. Up. VI.1.3). Śvetaketu was totally surprised because he had no idea about it. Then, his father told him: "Just as, my dear, by one clod of clay all that is made of clay becomes known, the modification being only a name arising from speech, while the truth is that it is just clay" (Chaṇd. Up. VI.1.4). What Uddhalaka Āruṇi was in mind was that whatever Śvetaketu thinks to know is only the name and form of the One from whom everything has come. It was meant to be an eye opener to the student that the real wisdom begins only when we reach "That One" from whom everything proceeds, in whom everything rests, towards whom everything moves. The amazing student responded: "Verily, those venerable men did not know this; for if they had known it, why would they not have told it to me? Venerable sir, please tell me that." "So be it, my dear," said Uddhalaka Aruni.

Thus begins Uddhalaka his instruction about Reality to his son, which ends up saying: "That which is the subtle essence, this whole world has for its self. That is true. That is the Self. That are thou" (Chaṇd. Up.VI.13.3). The ultimate Reality is not what we see with our physical

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eyes, not even by our mental eye. It is still far beyond. It is to be touched and experienced. What the physical and mental eyes do is help us provide a '*logia*' about that one Theos. Thus, we have what we call *theo-logia* or theology. But the Reality as such eludes our understanding. Reason does seek and search for reality. At its best, it is *śāstra* or science, even science about God. Reason, therefore, demands us to be scientific, methodic, rigorous, logical and argumentative. This is good, as it helps us ward off superstition, presumption, hallucinations and unholy assertion in the name of reality. Yet, reason has its own limitation in encountering God directly.

2. Human Reason and Search for the Meaning of Reality

When Aristotle divided sciences he divided them as theoretical, practical, and poetical. Then, he divided the theoretical again as mathematical, physical, and theological. The theological he called meta-physical, that is, beyond physics. His method was logical and methodological, in which reason had a predominant role. On all what we see here in this world we can have science. He called it physics. But the human mind can abstract from the concrete reality of things, and can think in terms of numbers and extension. This he named mathematics. Then what about the Reality of God or religion? This, he thought, is beyond the realm of physics and named it metaphysics and identified it with theology. But the human mind can search the meaning of beings, without so quickly and directly ending up in God. Thus, in course of time, the Aristotelian identification of metaphysics and theology was given up by the rational mind of the secular world.

Reason is a faculty of truth, not of falsehood and confusion, and as such should be accepted and admired. Reason goes ahead of itself in search of truth. But human reason has nothing in itself except what the senses bring to it. Reason does not touch reality directly. Senses do help reason. Hence, to the question what is truth, reason cannot give us a direct answer immediately. The Sanskrit word for truth is *satya*, a word derived from the noun *sat*, which literally means 'being'. Truth is the claim of being over us. A being, whatever it be, if it exists, it has a claim over me. I cannot deny its existence. I cannot bring it to non-existence. Even if I apparently destroy it, it would continue to exist in some other form. If I want to live peacefully I have to reconcile myself with it in some way. That is, I have to accept the reality of this being. This claim emanating from any being (*sat*) we call truth (*satya*). Truth is, therefore, reality that illumines reason. But reason has its own limitations. First of all, reason cannot come in touch with reality except through senses. As Thomas Aquinas says, reason has nothing in itself, except what is given to it by senses. Hence, the quest for truth, which, in other words, is the quest for meaning of things, is heavily dependent on the senses. Senses are blind carriers of data for the mind's reasoning. But mind, with the power of reason, can process the data and create what we call 'ideas' of reality based on the sense data brought to it. In this respect mind is like a computer, a great and fast word-processor that quickly categorizes different things with the help of ideas it has formed. Mind can also create new files for each of the newly discovered categories and keep them in the 'mental space' of memory allocated for that. All this is wonderful. Thus, human beings, once endowed with reason, came out as 'rational', a different kind of animal who can make judgment. In making judgments over beings reason rose up far above senses which can hardly separate itself from the concrete sense objects.

But making judgments was both a blessing and a curse of reason. Judgment was classically defined as "conformation of one's mind to the thing." Well said! But, in course of time, the judgments stored in the mind build up a 'pattern of thinking', which controls our thinking dynamics. We become victims of these patterns. Each tradition or people may develop its own pattern of thinking, all of which are important factors to be understood and admired, when we come to the problem of inculturation and indigenous ways of philosophizing and theologizing. Patterns are structures of limitations. The revelation of reality can at certain moments exceed the framework of our mental patterns and our minds should be open to that. Reason may refuse this because of the ready made patterns kept in the mind.

3. Search for Mystery in Reality

Reality can come down to us as meaning and mystery. Reality has several dimensions of mysteries which reason cannot penetrate. Therefore, the *Upaniṣads* rightly assert that what we can rightly say about the ultimate Reality is "not this, not this." "By what should one know him by whom all this is known? This Self is to be descried as 'not this, not this' (*neti, neti*)" (Br. Up. IV.5.15). To say anything more than this, would lead us into some sort of distortion, because this Reality, which is being as such, which is self-illumination, which by its very nature refuses all articulation or objectification, transcends all our attempts of 'grasping' it or bringing it under the purview or orbit of our so-called 'understanding'. Rather it transcends, leaves us in wonder and in an amazing gaze, not so much understanding it, but bending our head reverently to 'stand under' its all powerful and commanding spell. Yes, the really Real, as Śaṅkara calls it, *satyasya satyam,* is never the object of our mind, but always subject by nature, and dwells in us deeper than the level of reason, as subject, as consciousness and not as object of our idea which is a product of our mind. If this is true or makes some sense to us, then the most pertinent question about knowing the Reality is this. "He is incomprehensible, for he cannot be comprehended. He is indestructible, for he cannot be destroyed. He is unattached, for he does not attach himself. He is unfettered, for he does not suffer, he is not injured. Indeed, by what would one know the knower" (Br. Up. IV.5.15b).

How can we know the Reality who is by nature consciousness and, therefore, also subject by nature, without making him the object of our mind, or without getting satisfied with a caricature of this ineffable Reality produced in the mind, which we very proudly call 'my idea'. Unfortunately this idea is, however, not the Reality as such. Hence, to know the knower, we have to give up our desire to know by the mind which does not know anything without objectifying. In other words, we have to know the knower as knower as such. The only way for this is that we participate in him as subject with him. The human soul is also subject by nature. God and soul, both of them are endowed with consciousness which make them subjects and persons. The subject which is soul can participate in the absolute subject which is God, abiding in the soul as divine consciousness. Consciousness meets consciousness. They meet and merge, both participating in the consciousness of the other, both remaining as subjects. In other words, they both become one, transcending the dichotomy of object-subject opposition which is a stigma of our mental understanding. In the subjective level, both the absolute and the finite, God and soul, make their journey together, not to find out the meaning of Reality, but to relish the mysteries of Reality, being unveiled to the soul which participates more and more in the actions of the divine Self within it.

The modern world has lost the sense of mystery. Hence, this secularized world misses the mysterious dimensions of the Reality as well. The ancient mind was much more mystery-bound. It was easy for

Aristotle to identify metaphysics and theology. Faith in religion and in the absolute was natural, taken for granted. All were born and brought up in a culture where religion and mystery cults were very central to human life. Thus, in the cool shade of religions the ancient cultures grew up and spread. Cultures produced their own philosophies which were, of course, reason centred, but reason was ready to submit itself to that which is beyond reason.

Therefore, Uddhalaka instructed his son saying, "In the beginning, my dear, this was being alone, one only without a second" (Chand. Up. VI.2.1). The absolute was well recognized, accepted more by faith rather than by philosophical arguments for the existence of that absolute. Hence, *Brahmasūtra* begins saying, "Now, therefore, the enquiry into Brahman from whom the origin of all these things: *atātho brahma jijñāsa janmadyāsya yataḥ*" (*Brahmasūtra,* 1-2). That primeval Being is not proved to be there, but is presented as already existing, both in the world and in the depth of one's own consciousness. If that is accepted, the world is understandable as originating from it. This approach is different from the strictly Aristotelian or Scholastic approach of our journey from effect to cause. Later, the Indian philosopher Udayana, belonging to *Nyāya* school, presented arguments for such an approach which were very similar to what was proposed by St. Thomas Aquinas, though both of them were uninfluenced by the other.

After the era of scientism and domination of rational verification, contemporary philosophers began to show a renewed tendency towards the mystery of Being. Among them Martin Heidegger is a prominent one. Here comes a secular philosopher as a shepherd of the folk of being. He speaks to them and his sheep listen to his philosophical whisperings and respond to his voice. The philosopher, in return, elevates what the sheep offer to the level of logos and language, born from the creativity of the human thinking.[1] This conversation between the sheep and the shepherd, beings and philosopher, goes on and on. The being discloses itself more and more, and the philosopher is struck with wonder, contemplating the 'ever more', time and again being unveiled by the beings he encounters. His lovely sheep are so faithful, extremely dependent on him, and he, the philosopher loves them, builds tender tents for them. This is what thinking does.[2] Here thinking has a contemplative dimension. Indeed, a philosopher can very well be a contemplative.

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[1] Heidegger, *Brief ueber den Humanismus* (*Letter on Humanism*), Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1951, 19.

But unfortunately the being of these beings brings Heidegger, the philosopher before us, to the earth again and again and leaves him always on the earth, always wondering, always admiring the Being in time. For Heidegger, time is the golden thread to which the inquiry into being is tied. Therefore, for him, there is nothing beyond time. But the mysteries of beings, as they reveal themselves to us in time, can also raise us beyond time. When Jesus said, "I am the shepherd and you are the sheep" (Jn. 10: 5), he draws our attention to an earthly reality of sheep and shepherd. But he uses this as a symbol to draw our attention beyond what is in front of our eyes to the relationship between God and his people. From the frame work of time the soul is invited to go beyond time. The same could be said about other references of Jesus to the lilies in the field or the birds in the air (Mt. 6:26-28). Jesus the Shepherd not only builds tent for his sheep but also lays down his life for their deliverance. The entire dynamics of thinking is to relate time and eternity. "Your heavenly father knows that you need them all" (Mt. 6:32).

But there are other philosophers who think that the boundary of time should be overcome. Why not? Śaṅkara is a very good example for this. Heidegger and Śaṅkara both went in search of Being. Heidegger stopped with the Being in time. Śaṅkara went beyond time, beyond finitude, beyond names and forms and that which is finally declared to be the Reality is the incomprehensible, the immortal, the Atman (the Self) within us. Both of them even agree in expounding the dynamics of revelation of being. Being always reveals and conceals. Śaṅkara calls this *āvaraṇa-vikṣepa,* that is, the infinite being projects itself (*vikṣepa*) for our understanding, but because what is projected is no more the absolute as such, the very projection becomes its own veil (*āvaraṇa*). Hence, the human being has always to go beyond what is seen in time. Heidegger also speaks about the same dynamics of revealing and concealing, but refuses to go beyond the horizon of time. Though there is a faint vision of being revealing in mystery, the search never transcends the ambit of time. This may be because reason, left to itself, cannot rise beyond the horizon of time. It is faith that takes one beyond the limitations of time into the world of eternity where one meets divine consciousness through the eye of faith.

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[2] Heidegger, *Brief ueber den Humanismus*, 5.

4. Search for Wisdom through Faith

Wisdom is seen not only in erudite search for meaning, but also in the intuitive reading of mysteries that are being revealed. Mind may go after the meaning; but it is faith that continues the search into the untold dimensions of reality. Faith is a different way of knowing. It is neither the work nor the product of the mind. Faith is a response emerging from the depth of the human seeker of wisdom, whose soul, being touched by the self-revealing light of God, now turns to the source of this light, abandons reason at least for the time being, allows itself to be carried away by the super luminosity of this divine light. Faith is, thus, knowing by God's light, opting for what is known, by God's power, and surrendering oneself to it by God's grace. This light touches the soul gently, awakens it lovingly, invites it personally and beatifies it pleasantly. All these happen in the depth of the human soul. This does not mean a life of faith in search of divine wisdom is all rosy and glamorous to the standard of the world. Not at all! It can be a life of bitter purification through trials and tribulations, with continued demand on sacrifices. But in the heart of heart the soul is happy because it sees what has never been seen before, hears what is never heard and is blessed with a new wisdom. St. Paul presents this wisdom to those who are spiritually mature:

> Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, 'what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of men conceived, what God has prepared for those love him' (1Cor. 2:6-9).

This wisdom is not the work of human mind. This is a free gift, given only to those who are well disposed, spiritually mature, selfless and purified. It is God's spirit who is the source of this wisdom and it is the same Spirit who leads the soul through the same wisdom. St. Paul continues: "The Spirit searches everything, even the hidden depths of God's purposes" (1Cor. 2:10). How can the human mind, left to itself, search the hidden purposes of God? Only God's Spirit can guide us into the depth of the divine mysteries. This is the studentship of sacred wisdom. The *Chāṇdokya Upaniṣad* has its own lovely version about this kind of studentship:

> Now, what people call sacrifice is really the disciplined life of a student of sacred knowledge. Only by the disciplined life of a student of sacred knowledge does he who knows obtain that world. Now what people call 'what has been sacrificed' is really the disciplined life of a student of sacred knowledge, for only by sacrificing with the disciplined life of a student of scared knowledge does one obtain the Self (Chaṇd. Up. VIII.5.1).

Search for wisdom is a search with discipline and austerity, neither in worldly comforts nor in the rational debates. In the spiritually mature people, here reason gives way to faith. Thomas Aquinas speaks of two kinds of wisdom, one emerging from reason and the other coming from the Holy Spirit.

> The wisdom named among the gifts of the Holy Spirit is distinct from the wisdom found among the intellectual virtues. This second is acquired through study, but the first 'comes from on high'.[3]

The late Pope John Paul II quotes this text in his encyclical *Faith and Reason* (*Fides et Ratio*) and says:

> Yet the priority accorded to this wisdom does not lead the angelic doctor to overlook the presence of two other complementary forms of wisdom – philosophical wisdom, which is based upon the capacity of the intellect, for all its natural limitations, to explore reality, and the theological wisdom, which is based upon Revelation and which explores the content of faith, entering the very mystery of God (*Faith and Reason*, 44).

However, one wonders how much our present form of Christian theological training helps one to grow in divine faith rather than growing in the study of the same. Real faith is not in the rational level of investigation, but in the unconditional surrender to the Word of God. Here the level of understanding or consciousness is superior to reason, by which we participate in the consciousness of God.

What has been said so far makes it very clear that there are two kinds of understanding, by reason and by faith. This is because what the soul seeks in the divine wisdom is totally different from that which is sought by the mind. *Kena Upanishad* says: "That which is not thought by the mind but by which, they say, the mind is thought; that, verily, know thou, is Brahman and not what (people) hear adore" (*Kena Up.* I.6.). People may adore here the visible mediums through which the supreme is communicated. The question is not about that; instead, what really the Absolute is? The text continues:

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[3] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, 1,6; II-II, 45, 1, ad 2.

> If you think that you have understood Brahman well, you know it but slightly, whether it refers to you (the individual self) or to the gods. So then is it to be investigated by you (the pupil who thinks) that Brahman is now understood by me (*Kena Up.* II.1).

The student of wisdom may think that Brahman is now understood by him. This is not a good sign of a searching student, because the not-yet-known always exceeds what is already known. The soul, while on earth, always remains in a deep thirst for the not-yet-revealed, though it does not die because of this desire. As a *bhakta*, he may humbly sing with St. John of the Cross:

> Reveal your presence
> And the vision of your beauty be my death.[4]

These lines are understandable only through faith. It is the unwavering faith, which is never an idea in the abstract, but a personal encounter with the self-revealing God that prompts the soul to sing it's longing for and joy in union with him. The soul surrenders in faith. Reason is neither abandoned, nor opposed; but is pleasantly integrated into faith and is always at the disposal of faith, the new wisdom the soul has received from God.

Gabriel Marcel, the renowned French philosopher, makes three oppositions between the authentic and the inauthentic person. The authentic person is of Being-attitude, who rejoices in the presence of the other being. The inauthentic person, on the contrary, is a person of Having-attitude, who rejoices only in the possession of that being. The person of being is prone to mystery and finds his delight in the revelation of the same, because he understands Reality is much more than what he can ever comprehend. But the inauthentic person tends to reject mystery from his life and looks at everything what he fails to understand as 'problem', something to be got rid of immediately. His life is a life of problem-solving and he thinks that reason has an answer for everything. Unfortunately, this is not true. Reason does not have answer for everything, simply because Reality transcends reason.

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[4] John of the Cross, *The Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza 11, in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, Trivandrum: Carmel Publishing Centre, 1996, 411.

The authentic person who loves mystery now has recourse to faith, when the inauthentic one turns back to his own views and opinions and tries to impose them on all others. Here inauthentic person uses reason to assert himself over others, whereas the authentic person gently waits for the revelation of Being that the mystery be revealed and Reality be embraced by all of us together. Faith in Reality is also faith in one another, faith in religion and faith in God.

5. Wisdom is Given to the Little Ones

I remember a Malayalam proverb the meaning of which runs as follows: "Water flows only to the lower ground." I got this from my home when I was a young boy. When my mother finds any of her children proud and boasting, she used to tell: "My child, water flows only to the lower ground." This is a deep insight and a beautiful lesson from nature. The same is literally true with regard to the Holy Spirit whose symbol is water. Just like water flows down to the lower ground, so does the Spirit stoop down to the meek and the humble of heart. So, Mary our Mother rejoiced in the Lord and sang: "He has remembered me his lowly servant" (Lk. 1:48). The Holy Spirit condescended on her and the Word, the supreme Wisdom of God, became flesh in her. No higher or greater human form of divine Wisdom is ever imaginable. Jesus is the Wisdom Incarnate. As a human child of his mother and a divine child of his own Father in heaven, one day he raised his heart to heaven and said: "I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father, for such was thy gracious will" (Mt. 11:25-26). It is clear that higher wisdom is not a matter of academic erudition, but a matter of divine revelation to the little ones, to the lowly and the simple. They are open and nothing impedes the flow of divine water. They are humble and, therefore, there is no blockade made by ego-consciousness. They are well disposed, because they have already surrendered their hearts and souls to the Lord of all hearts. Hence, Wisdom naturally flows to them.

Little Flower, St. Therese of Lisieux, is a brilliant example of this, a young woman of twenty-four who has written no academic works, but had authored only her wonderful autobiography, *Story of a Soul.* This autobiography is literally the story of a soul, in the sense that what is written is what really happened in a simple soul who loved God, her beloved Jesus, unconditionally. There are profound spiritual insights presenting un-arbitrarily, as if spontaneously flowing from the real context of life, which are very powerfully impressive as well as instructive. The theology here is an unsophisticated theology of lived faith. Yes, Therese teaches us that the age-old Indian dictum is true: "Knowledge is becoming." Her autobiography is the theological text for us. This young woman is declared the Doctor of the Church and is greatly honoured all over the world by the Catholic Church. Quoting the words of Jesus already cited above, she wrote in her autobiography: "Ah! Had the learned who spent their life in study come to me, undoubtedly they would have been astonished to see a child of fourteen understand perfection's secret, secrets all their knowledge cannot reveal because to possess them one has to be poor in spirit!"[5] She also gives us the reason for this: "Because I was little and week, He lowered himself to me, and he instructed me secretly in the *things* of His love." To the lower ground water flows! To the little ones wisdom is freely given.

6. Conclusion

My search for wisdom is an incessant journey. Of course, I love reason. Reason as a faculty of truth is wonderful. Reason should, however, give way to faith. Faith, once awakened, is an everlasting source of eternal light which can lead us across all frontiers of life to the hidden mysteries of God, the Divine Reality we encounter. We will find ourselves and the Divine Reality on the verge of blissful comprehension, serene and peace-emanating, than in the midst of a loud debate which leaves the mind tired and sometimes even fettered by one's own ideas.

The ultimate Reality, which is God transcends all and may stoop down to us to reveal Himself. Are we ready to accept Him, even if it questions the pattern of our thinking and accustomed ways of life? Or, do we oppose the new revelation of being/truth to us? To say 'yes' to this revealing light of Reality or God, we need another type of intelligence in us, which is not a product of reason but a gift we receive from the self-revealing God. We call this faith. Faith has a different source, namely the one who is the source of everything, whose light enlightens us and abides in us as the eye of God. People sometimes call it the 'third eye' or the 'luminous eye'. When this eye is open we see everything differently. We begin not to understand God, but to participate in His consciousness. Thus, faith is the way to touch God, to experience God as he is in Himself who, as pure consciousness, can never become the object of our mind, but can be the innermost subject of our being. Bliss is his nature, peaces is his gift. But one has to become free and unencumbered to relish him, moving through the unfathomable mysteries of God, rather than ideas about Him.

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[5] St. Therese of Lisieux, *Story of a Soul*, Philippines: New Manila, 2005, 105.

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RATIONALITY OF MYSTICISM

A Methodological Proposal

George Karuvelil[◆]

1. Introduction

Discussions on the cognitive worth or the truth-value of mysticism and religious experience have been with us for sometime now. The present article examines some of these attempts at exploring the rationality of mysticism. This leads me to conclude that although there have been some original and innovative studies in this field they are yet to make any decisive headway. The main reason for this lack of progress seems to be the absence of a method appropriate for studying the complex phenomena that go under the name of religion. Towards the end of the article, therefore, I propose a complex method that incorporates insights from various authors and methods. Let me begin, however, by acknowledging that neither 'rationality' nor 'mysticism' is a clear, unambiguous term. Therefore, it is only proper that a discussion about the rationality of mysticism begins by clarifying these terms.

1. 1. Mysticism

I shall take 'mysticism' or 'mystical experience' to be a subclass of the more generic 'religion' or 'religious experience'. What is its characteristic mark? Till recently, there has been an unwritten consensus in the literature on the matter that mystical experiences are one and the same everywhere, that it is a unitive state of consciousness. Our normal waking consciousness and experiences are bipolar: there is a subject who experiences and an object that is experienced. My seeing of a tree, for example, has a subject who does the seeing (myself) and an object seen (tree). If we go by the said consensus, this bipolar structure would not really apply to mystical states, at least not without significant modifications. William James put it thus: "In spite of their repudiation of articulate self-description, mystical states in general assert a pretty distinct theoretic drift. It is possible to give the outcome of the majority of them in

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terms that point in definite philosophical directions. One of these directions is optimism, and the other is monism."[1] The basic mystical claim, then, is that there is an underlying unity behind the multiplicity that is experienced in ordinarily waking state of consciousness. James becomes lyrical when he talks of it as having an "eternal unanimity," "the everlasting and triumphant mystical tradition, hardly altered by differences of clime or creed."[2]

It is not that there are no differences. James acknowledges that "the kinds of truth communicable in mystical ways ... are various. Some of them relate to this world – visions of the future, the reading of hearts, the sudden understanding of texts, the knowledge of distant events, for example..."[3] He recognizes that even to talk of unitve consciousness being typically mystical is an oversimplification because Sāṅkhya is dualistic, not even all Vedāntic traditions are monistic, variations are found within Christianity, and so on. He even goes on to say that the mystical feeling of enlargement and union "has no specific intellectual content whatever of its own. It is capable of forming matrimonial alliances with material furnished by the most diverse philosophies and theologies."[4] In spite of noticing such diversities, however, he would not repudiate the claim regarding the monistic drift of mysticism.

What it shows is that James, being true to the phenomena he explored, was rather ambivalent about the matter. At one moment he would emphatically affirm the unitive or monistic character of mystical experiences. But other times he seems not so sure. This point about the unitive character of mysticism has been discussed and debated ever since. The consensus remained in its favour till recently. This was understood to be the common truth that lies underneath all differences found in mystical literature. In the words of Wayne Proudfoot, "Though there are differences, it has seemed to many [including James] that Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, Jewish, and Christian mystics testify to a common experience."[5]

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[1] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (Being the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion Delivered at Edinburgh 1901-1902), New York: Mentor, Penguin Books, 319.

[2] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 321.

[3] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 314.

[4] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 326.

[5] Wayne Proudfoot, *Religious Experience*, Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985, 120.

At the core of this common experience lies its unitive nature. However, times have changed and this position has come under sustained attack. The most powerful criticism of that consensus comes from Steven Katz, which we shall examine in due course.[6] For the moment all that we want to do is to circumscribe the topic so as to get the discussion going. For this purpose, I shall take this claim about the unitive nature of reality as our starting point.

1.2. Rationality

What about the word 'rational'? What does it mean when we say that something, say an event *x*, is rational or not rational or even more strongly, irrational? There are at least three different uses of that word in the context of mysticism. I shall call them the commendatory, the explanatory, and the justificatory or the epistemological senses of rationality.

First, we shall deal with the commendatory sense. Sometimes, the word 'rational' is used to indicate a value judgment, a positive evaluation and approval of something or someone. This would be contrasted with the 'irrational', the 'weird', the 'unusual', the 'abnormal', the 'bizarre', and the like, all of which are terms of reproach. Science, in this sense, is often taken as the paradigm of rationality whereas magic, faith-healing, and superstitions would be irrational, or at least not rational. 'Rationality', in this commendatory use of the word, can also mean that the occurrence is 'normal' or something that is to be expected. Related terms are 'reasonable' and 'appropriate'. Applied to mysticism, this would mean that mystical occurrences are not weird or pathological but something normal and healthy.

The word 'rational' used in the explanatory sense means that an occurrence of an event *x* is susceptible to explanation. Thus, for example, human ability to fly or to engage in space travel would have been considered irrational at one time. But once the mechanics of how this can happen has been explained, these become rational. 'Rational' here is contrasted with that which is mysterious (not susceptible to explanation) at the very least, or more strongly that such occurrences are not real, that they are products of fantasy or delusion. The main difference between the commendatory and explanatory senses is that the former includes and the latter does not include a value judgement. But the fact that explanatory sense of 'rational' is sometimes contrasted with the 'fantastic' and the 'imaginary' shows that it is easy to pass from the explanatory to the commendatory. When the explanatory sense of the word 'rational' is applied to mysticism, it means that mystical happenings or mystical experiences reported by different mystics are not really mysterious, that they can be explained. Explanations may vary from an appeal to divine intervention to reliance on psychological or physical and chemical factors.

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[6] Steven Katz has argued his case in a number of his writings, the most discussed one is: "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism" in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. Steven T. Katz, 22-72, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.

The justificatory or epistemic sense of rationality concerns the truth of judgements or propositions. For example, as a result of seeing an object moving in the sky and hearing a particular kind of sound I might judge that an aeroplane is moving overhead. Is this judgement correct? Understood thus, justificatory or epistemic rationality applies to considerations that might be given in support of the truth or falsity of a given proposition. The demand here is to cite evidence for or against the truth of the proposition. The distinction between explanatory and epistemic senses of rationality is based on the object to which the term 'rationality' is applied. Explanatory rationality applies to an event or the occurrence of an experience whereas justificatory rationality applies not to the occurrence of an experience but to the content or proposition claimed as a result of the experience. In the above example explanatory rationality applies to the event of seeing and hearing, whereas epistemic rationality applies to the judgement, or rather to the available justification for taking that judgement as correct or incorrect. This distinction between explanation and justification, however, may not always hold. In some cases, explanation of an event may coincide with the evidence given for the proposition. The above example of seeing an aeroplane is such a case. The event of my seeing will have an explanation when it is found that there is an air corridor passing through my place and a certain flight is scheduled around the time I saw the movement in the sky. These findings also function as the evidence for the proposition that an aeroplane is overhead. It is clear, therefore, that there is an overlap between the explanatory and justificatory senses of rationality. This distinction, however, is important for examining the rationality of mysticism, as we shall see.

Having, thus, circumscribed the subject matter, we can move on to consider the rationality of mysticism. We shall begin with the first sense of rational, implying a sense of commendation or reproach.

2. Mysticism: Normal or Pathological?

Mysticism has had an ambivalent position in established religions like Christianity. On the one hand, it is highly esteemed and, on the other, it is looked upon with great suspicion. It is not surprising, therefore, to see that the term 'mysticism' entered the Anglo-American discourse as a term of reproach.[7] In the 18th century, mystics were considered irrational libertarians engaged in extravagant emotional practices. The women mystics and their devotional practices, in particular, were taken as cases of disappointed and displaced love. Mysticism, then, implied a sense of "misplaced sexuality, unintelligibility, pretension, and reason-to-be-damned extravagance."[8]

It is this idea that confronted William James when he started his classic study of mysticism. He tells us that the "words 'mysticism' and 'mystical' are often used as terms of mere reproach, to throw at any opinion which we regard as vague and vast and sentimental, and without a base in either facts or logic."[9] Against this idea of the 'mystical' as something abnormal and weird, he sets out to show that this phenomenon is "surely far from being uncommon."[10] Commenting on his own experiments, he says:

> One conclusion was forced upon my mind at that time, and my impression of its truth has ever since remained unshaken. It is that our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness...[11]

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[7] Leigh Eric Schmidt, "The Making of Modern 'Mysticism'," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71, 2 (2003), 273-302.

[8] Schmidt, "The Making of Modern 'Mysticism'."

[9] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 292.

[10] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 296.

[11] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 298.

In other words, rather than consider abnormal and weird, mystical experiences must be considered as something universally present albeit different from ordinary waking consciousness. Towards the end of the study that takes him through Hinduism, Neo-Platonism, Sufism, Christian mysticism, and Whitmanism, he finds "the everlasting and triumphant mystical tradition" to be "hardly altered by differences of clime or creed," as we have already noted.[12] Moreover, he is convinced that "No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded… At any rate, they forbid a premature closing of our accounts with reality."[13] Mystical experiences, in other words, open up realms of reality that would otherwise remain hidden; any account of reality that neglects mystical experiences would be poorer for that. After James, there have been others who have followed this path. Thus, far from seeing mysticism as something odd and abnormal, there are even suggestions that mysticism is an innate capacity of every human being.[14] Like other human capacities, it may be more developed in some and less in others. What is more, there are even suggestions that developing this capacity is "inherently and inalienably healthy," a suggestion that finds increased acceptance in the contemporary world.[15]

3. De-automatization: An Attempted Explanation

Mysticism may not be irrational in the sense of being weird or abnormal, but is it rational in the sense of having an explanation? In raising this question, we run into the problem of the so-called reductionist explanations. Reductionism is an attempt to assimilate religious and mystical phenomena into something other than religion. Thus, religiously oriented writers tend to consider Freud's or Durkheim's accounts of religion as reductionist. Among the non-reductionist accounts, the most plausible explanation is perhaps Arthur Deikman's theory of de-automatization.

Deikman's understanding of mysticism is in keeping with what we have identified it to be: a state of consciousness where the multiplicity or subject-object dichotomy of our everyday consciousness disappears and the subject has a non-analytic or unitive apprehension of reality. It is a conviction "that reality is in some way connected so as to be a unified whole rather than a collection of independently existing parts."[16] He thinks that "it might be possible to understand mysticism by employing reason, experiment, and knowledge of development and cognitive psychology."[17] The result is his theory of de-automatization.

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[12] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 321.

[13] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 298.

[14] Robert K. C. Forman ed., *The Innate Capacity: Mysticism, Psychology, and Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. See also, Dan Merkur, *Mystical Moments and Unitive Thinking*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999.

[15] Merkur, *Mystical Moments and Unitive Thinking*, ix.

De-automatization is understood as an undoing of automatization. It is seen that when an action is done repeatedly it requires less attention. The intermediary steps of the action that initially required a lot of attention eventually drop out of consciousness. Such actions, in other words, become automatized. The contention is that "not only motor behaviour but perception and thinking, too, show automatization."[18] Experimental evidence from developmental psychology suggests that as children grow in age and their cognitive abilities become developed, they pay less and less attention to the sensual and concrete aspects of what they perceive, and tend to focus more on the conceptual and abstract aspects. This can be seen as providing support for the contention that perception in adults is an automatized process. The implication is that in the normal process of cognitive development there occurs a loss of attention to details. De-automatization is the reversal of this process, "an undoing of automatization, presumably by *re-investing actions and percepts with attention.*"[19]

3.1 The Process

Deikman theorizes that the mystical practices of contemplation and renunciation are meant to aid this reversal. "Since automatization normally accomplishes the transfer of attention from a percept or action to abstract thought activity, the meditation procedure exerts a force in the reverse direction. Cognition is inhibited in favour of perception; the active

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[16] Arthur J. Deikman, "A Functional Approach to Mysticism," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 7, 11-12 (November-December 2000) http://www.deikman.com (April 21, 2002).

[17] Deikman, "A Functional Approach to Mysticism."

[18] Arthur J. Deikman, "Deautomatization and the Mystical Experience" in *Understanding Mysticism*, ed. Richard Woods, New York: Image Books, 1980, 247.

[19] Deikman, "Deautomatization and the Mystical Experience," 248; italics original.

intellectual style is replaced by a receptive perceptual mode."[20] This accords with the practices of the mystics. Buddhist practices like Vipassana and Zen can be considered as ways of getting rid of concepts or getting away from the head that so constantly occupies the life of an adult. Even Christian mystics, with all their practice of *lectio divina* and conceptual meditation, recommend these more to the beginners than for the adepts; those more advanced in prayer life are advised to go beyond concepts. This process is aided by the practice of renunciation adopted as a life-style since it carries the attitudes of the meditative periods to all the segments of the mystics' life. Our analytic, intellectual life finds its "nutrition" in the objects of our everyday world. Renunciation, by banishing such thoughts, helps to "weaken and even disrupt" the supply of this nutrition and thereby aids de-automatizaiton.

Having explained mystical experiences in terms of de-automatization of consciousness, Deikman goes on to consider if this explanation can account for some of the common characteristics associated with mysticism. He picks out five such features for scrutiny. Of these, we shall restrict ourselves to the third feature (unity), which we have taken as the defining feature of mysticism.

3.2. Cognitive Possibilities

Traditionally, psycho-analysts have considered mystical experience and its unitive thinking to be a regression into an infantile, or a primitive style of thinking – a style of thinking that is more at home with the sensuous and the vivid than the conceptual and the abstract. Deikman acknowledges that de-automatization and the perception of unity can be considered this way.[21] Having granted regression as a possibility, he goes on to consider two other possibilities: that the perceived unity may be of one's own psychic structure or that it may be a structure of the actual world.

He explains the second possibility this way: we do not perceive the world directly. Rather, we have sensations and associated memories; from these we infer the nature of the stimulating object. The actual substance of perception might as well be the electrochemical activity, which would then be homogeneous. The actual contents of awareness would, then, be variations of the same substance. Now if awareness were turned back upon itself, with the help of contemplative techniques,

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[20] Deikman, "Deautomatization and the Mystical Experience," 248.

[21] More recent researches, however, seem to discredit this view. According to Dan Merkur, the "current consensus among developmentalists … [is] that people are born with innate abilities to communicate with their care-givers. There is no neo-natal developmental phase of … subject-object non-differentiation." Merkur, *Mystical Moments and Unitive Thinking*, ix.

> this fundamental homogeneity (unity) of perceived reality – the electrochemical activity – might itself be experienced as a truth about the outer world, rather than the inner one. Unity, the idea and the experience that we are one with the world and with God, would thus constitute a valid perception insofar as it pertained to the nature of the thought process, but need not in itself be a correct perception of the external world.[22]

Logically, however, there is also the possibility that the unity perceived by the mystic is actually a feature of the real world. Since de-automatization is an undoing of a psychic organization that limits the availability of attentional resources, it is possible that by reversing or temporarily suspending that organization, "aspects of reality that were formerly unavailable might then enter awareness." Thus, "de-automatization may permit the awareness of new dimensions of the total stimulus array – a process of 'perceptual expansion'."[23]

It is one thing to say that it is logically possible for mystical experiences to be revealing an aspect or dimension of reality that is closed to our ordinary everyday waking consciousness, and it is quite another to claim that it actually does so. Deikman, in other words, provides us with an explanation for the occurrence of mystical states without providing us a justification for the proposition about the unitary nature of reality. This takes us to the third, perhaps the most important, sense of rationality: epistemic rationality.

4. Epistemic Rationality of Mysticism

Till now I have overlooked the real difficulties and complexities and proceeded as if examining the rationality of mysticism is a straightforward affair. But once we begin to ask the question whether mystical experiences provide any epistemic warrant for asserting or denying the content of any proposition, we realize the almost total disarray we are in. In this section we shall examine some well-known thinkers and their positions in this realm.

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[22] Deikman, "Deautomatization and the Mystical Experience," 256.

[23] Deikman, "Deautomatization and the Mystical Experience."

4.1 The Issues

In examining various positions we shall pay special attention to three issues: (1) method of studying mysticism and religion, (2) whether there is a common core to mystical experiences, and (3) the object of epistemic justification. Not only is there a lack of scholarly agreement on the epistemic warrant of religious and mystical claims, but it is not even clear as to how one should go about examining this matter. This is the problem of method. When there is no clarity of procedure, it is only to be expected that there would be disagreement about the epistemic warrant of religious and mystical claims. Therefore, not having an appropriate method is an important impediment in examining the epistemic rationality of mysticism. In making this statement I assume, of course, that there are certain cognitive claims for which warrant is sought. Of these, we have taken one claim – the unitive nature of reality – as a defining characteristic of mysticism. But questions have been raised as to whether there are any mystical claims as such (as opposed to claims of individual mystics or claims of mystics of particular religious persuasions) whose rationality may be examined. Are any core assertions – such as unity – common to mystical experiences? A third issue is this: is epistemic or justificatory rationality properly applied to persons who believe something or other, or to beliefs or propositions? The significance of this distinction may not be obvious at the outset, but will become clear soon.

4.2. William James

I have suggested that the moment we raise the issue of justification of mystical claim, we enter an epistemological *cul-de-sac*. This can be seen from the conclusion that James arrived at the end of his painstaking study. Raising the question about the warrant furnished by mystical experiences, he seeks to answer it in three sentences.

> (1) Mystical states, when well developed, usually are, and have the right to be, absolutely authoritative over the individuals to whom they come.
>
> (2) No authority emanates from them which should make it a duty for those who stand outside of them to accept their revelations uncritically.

> (3) They break down the authority of the non-mystical or rationalistic consciousness, based upon the understanding and the senses alone. They show it to be only one kind of consciousness. They open out the possibility of other orders of truth, in which, so far as anything in us vitally responds to them, we may freely continue to have faith.[24]

It amounts to saying that the person who has the experience may believe in any proposition which he or she thinks is revealed by experience. The subject of experience has a privileged access to some information and on the basis of that privilege possesses the epistemic warrant for believing the concerned proposition. But an observer, a third party, who does not have any privileged access, is not warranted in holding the same belief. With some variations, this is the dominant position found in the epistemology of religious experience today.[25]

The issue here is the third one we have raised: Does epistemic rationality apply to persons or propositions? Although I suggested in the introduction that epistemic justification is a matter of examining the warrantedness of propositions or cognitive claims, it does not accord with what James says here; nor does it accord with the practice of a good many, one might even say the majority, of practising epistemologists. They seem to think that justificatory rationality applies not to propositions but to the persons who believe propositions. Let me explain it by reverting to our perceptual example given earlier. When I hear a certain kind of sound and look up the sky I see certain object moving in the sky and I come to believe that there is an aeroplane in the sky. If epistemic rationality applies primarily to persons, then the proper question to ask is: am I justified in believing that an aeroplane is flying in the sky, on the basis of what I have seen and heard or any other evidence I might have? The other way of posing the question, the way I have been posing it, is to ask: Is the proposition "There is an aeroplane flying in the sky" true or warranted? In this case it does not matter whether I or anybody has the experience of seeing and hearing; not even whether anybody has asserted or believed that proposition.

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[24] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 323-4.

[25] Most notable among these authors is William Alston who has made this contention in a detailed manner in his book, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991). For more authors who take this approach, see, George Karuvelil, "Some Problems in the Epistemology of Religion" in *Interrelations and Interpretations*, Job Kozhamthadom ed., New Delhi: Intercultural Publications, 1997, 109-140.

Although the terms 'justification' and 'rationality' are often held to be applying primarily to persons, I have argued elsewhere that this is a mistake.[26] The most basic reason for this contention is that the purpose of epistemic justification is to establish the truth of propositions and not the culpability or otherwise, of persons who believe. When justificatory rationality is seen in these terms, it is obvious that a person can honestly and truly believe a false proposition. A person may be totally convinced of the truth of a proposition and the concerned proposition may be false. Epistemic rationality, therefore, is better considered as applying more to propositions than to persons. As far as the truth of propositions arising from mystical experiences is concerned, then, we can agree with Wayne Proudfoot that mystical "experiences have [only] the epistemic status of hypotheses."[27] Their truth, if any, needs to be established independently.

Once this stand is adopted, it immediately affects our method. It closes the phenomenological route that goes by the conviction of persons having mystical experiences, as a viable means of establishing the epistemic rationality of mysticism.[28] It is seen that those who undergo mystical experiences invariably come to consider what they experience in those moments as more real than what is experienced in their everyday lives. It is to designate such intense sense of reality, terms like "ultimately real," "*pāramārthika sat*," etc., are used; such reality is contrasted with what is "only relatively real" or "*vyāvahārika sat*." This contrast is most dramatically expressed in the Indian traditions that draw a parallel between waking and dreaming states of consciousness. Just as we recognize dreams for what they are when we awake from sleep, so is the reality we experience in our ordinary waking state of consciousness, when seen in the light of mystical states. It is obvious that, phenomenologically, mystical experiences bring with them an intense sense of reality. James calls it the noetic quality of mystical experiences and considers it one of the primary marks by which mystical states can be identified.[29] But no matter how intensely this noetic quality is felt by the subject, it remains only a psychic fact. Although the subject might feel intensely about the noetic quality of his experience, it provides only a phenomenological report and not any independent evidence of truth. It is this phenomenological route to epistemology that is denied once we realize that epistemic justification applies primarily to propositions and not to persons. Epistemologically, the noetic quality experienced in mystical moments must remain only a hypothesis. This is the implication of accepting that epistemic rationality applies to propositions and not to persons.

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[26] George Karuvelil, "Epistemic Justification and the Possibility of Empirical Evidence," *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research* 12, 1 (1994), 29-48.

[27] Proudfoot, *Religious Experience*, 163.

[28] For more details of this phenomenological approach as applied to religious experience, see Karuvelil, "Some Problems in the Epistemology of Religion."

[29] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 293.

Deikman gives us some additional empirical factors for not taking phenomenological reports as epistemological evidence. They include psychological disorders such as depersonalization where an individual feels his own self and the outside world as unreal or a feeling of the mind being dissociated from the body, feeling that one is a machine, etc., and the fact that similar effects can be produced by LSD.[30] Deikman, therefore, sees the need to distinguish between feeling of reality and reality itself. The latter calls for some sort of epistemic evidence other than the subject's own claim.

4.3. Arthur Deikman

A commonly used alternative to the phenomenological path is to take the support of quantum mechanics. Once the mystical core is identified with unity and inter-connectedness as we have done, it is an easy enough temptation, because some experiments in quantum theory indicate reality to be an interconnected whole. Deikman, though aware of this kind of 'evidence' from science, is not enamoured of it because he knows that science keeps changing and to rely on today's science to provide evidence for mystical claims is to risk its repudiation tomorrow. Rather than rely on science he prefers to look for cross-cultural evidence. He finds such support in two factors: one is the "compelling consensus of the mystics" and the other service-mindedness.[31] He acknowledges the possible objection that the "consensus is due to social contagion, ideas spreading through direct contact from one mystic to another, across cultural and geographic boundaries." But he does not find this objection serious because it is found in different cultures and about the same time. Also, the fact that many theistic mystics uphold the unitive view of reality against severe opposition from their official Church or religious establishment goes against the social contagion view. He also cites occasional experiences of non-mystics. Although occurring for brief moments, such experiences agree with the contention of the mystics.

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[30] Deikman, "Deautomatization and the Mystical Experience," 252.

[31] Deikman, "A Functional Approach to Mysticism."

The second factor that Deikman considers as 'evidence' for the mystical claim of the connectedness of reality is selfless service, or what he calls "serving-the-task."[32] Since I consider such 'evidence' to be of questionable value, I shall not go into it. But I do think that Deikman's argument from the "compelling consensus of the mystics" provides the best evidence for the mystical claim to unity. Dan Merkur does even a better job than Deikman to show that there is such a consensus. After citing evidence from various sources, including the testimony of Martin Bueber of "I-Thou" fame, he concludes: "The very fact that Catholic, Sufi, and Jewish mystics have apologized for experiences that they did not wish to experience, indicates that the experiences were real… The experience commences as an interpersonal encounter, but God ceases to be felt as a distinct 'Thou' when, at climax, one's normal or realistic sense of oneself is replaced by an ideal self who is seemingly God."[33]

On the other hand, Deikman's method of identifying mystical experience seems to be problematic from a critical and methodological perspective. While emphasizing the unitive element of mysticism, he neglects the Jamesian finding that mystical consciousness is "capable of forming matrimonial alliances with material furnished by the most diverse philosophies and theologies."[34] This lacuna is exploited by Steven Katz to arrive at the opposite conclusion.

4.4. Katz and Proudfoot: Any *Religious* Claims?

So far we have seen that in as much as the object of justification is the proposition and not the person, the approaches of Deikman and Merkur are more appropriate. However, such a treatment of the rationality of mysticism is based on the assumption that the proposition (at least, one of them) needing justification is the unitive nature of reality. I have already noted in passing that, although this contention was generally accepted as a common feature of mystical experiences, this has been questioned in recent years. Steven Katz is in the forefront of those who question this. Therefore, we need to move to the second issue raised in the context of epistemic rationality: what is/are the claim/s whose rationality may be examined? Are there *any mystical claims as such* whose rationality may be examined? Or, are there only claims of individual mystics or claims of mystics of particular socially identifiable religious persuasions?

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[32] Deikman, "A Functional Approach to Mysticism."

[33] Merkur, *Mystical Moments and Unitive Thinking*, 16.

[34] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 326.

Examining the accounts provided by mystics of different religious traditions, Steven Katz comes to the conclusion that mystical experiences are shaped by the conceptual structures or doctrinal presuppositions of different mystics. Since these presuppositions are irreducibly plural, mystical experiences too are irreducibly plural. Unitive kind of mysticism is seen to be more typical of those religious traditions that are influenced by Neo-Platonic and Indic traditions than of strict mono-theistic traditions like Judaism or Islam. Upon this view, then, there is no common core to mystical experiences. They are all different. It is not that Katz is unaware of the similarity found in the descriptions of mystics, a similarity that so impressed James, Deikman, and others. He is very much aware of them. But he considers such similarity only superficial and not genuine. The basic reasoning is that since the empirical background of the mystics is varied, even apparently similar descriptions have different meanings. Talk of a common core (even attempts to classify mystical experiences into different kinds) is the result of "forcing multifarious and extremely variegated forms of mystical experience into improper interpretative categories which lose sight of the fundamentally important differences between the data studied."[35]

Wayne Proudfoot follows Katz in this regard. Like Katz, he denies that there are any common characteristics on the basis of which experiences may be classified as mystical or religious. He examines the alleged marks of mysticism like ineffability and noetic quality, only to rule them out as having any descriptive value. Finally, when he makes an explicit attempt to define religious experience, he is only able to come up with an empty formula which says, "A religious experience is an experience that is identified by its subject as religious..."[36] or that "the distinguishing mark of religious experience is the subject's belief that the experience can only be accounted for in religious terms."[37] In other words, Proudfoot, the philosopher of religion, can only report what the subject of experience says; he himself, having looked at the experiences of various subjects, finds nothing that could be characterized as religious. It would be no exaggeration to say that for Katz and Proudfoot, there is no such thing as mysticism or religion, except in a psychological or sociological sense. There are only particular experiences or particular social formations which have been characterized as religious or mystical. But when we examine them we find they are all different. It seems to me that there must be something really wrong with a method of investigation that leads to this kind of conclusion.

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[35] Katz, "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism," 25.

[36] Katz, "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism," 183.

5. The Problem of Method

We have seen that the phenomenological method is not satisfactory for justification of epistemic claims. The method of textual comparison adopted by Deikman and others invite the criticism of ignoring important differences. The strength of Katz's method lies in the close attention he gives to the different historical, cultural, and linguistic background of the mystics. For this reason, this approach is sometimes characterized as "empirical."[38] But his excessive preoccupation with the Kantian doctrine that there are no pure experiences unmediated by prior concepts prevents him from taking the commonalities seriously and to look for a comprehensive understanding of mysticism with their commonalities and differences. This is a sort of blindness towards theory.

In spite of some good insights, a similar blindness is also found in Proudfoot. He makes an excellent distinction between description and explanation. According to him, faithful *description* of religious experience requires that the description be done from the participant's perspective and not of a neutral observer. Not to do so would amount to reductionism at the level of descriptions and this will transform religious phenomena into something else. For example, to "describe the experience of the mystic by reference only to alpha waves, altered heart rate, and changes in bodily temperature is to misdescribe it"[39] because this is not how the mystic identifies his experience. However, having given a description that is acceptable to the mystic or the believer, it is perfectly legitimate to provide its *explanation* in terms that are not familiar or acceptable to subject/insider/mystic/believer. Explanation is done from the perspective of a scientist or an observer and not that of the participant. Proudfoot gives the example of historians who "offer explanations of past events by employing such concepts as socialization, ideology, means of production, feudal economy" and so on which may not be "properly ascribed to the people whose behaviour the historian studies."[40]

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[37] Katz, "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism," 223.

[38] Denise L. Carmody and John T. Carmody, *Mysticism: Holiness East and West*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, 6.

[39] Proudfoot, *Religious Experience*, 196.

On the face of it, the distinction between descriptive and explanatory reduction makes eminent sense. It enables one to combine the insider perspective of the phenomenological approach in descriptions with the objective, outsider perspective in explanations. What, then, leads to his blindness towards theory? It comes from the fact that the non-reductive descriptions play no role in his understanding of religious experience and mysticism. In order to see this, we should begin by asking what is it that calls for an explanation, a particular religious experience or the whole class or classes of experience qualified as religious? It is clear that, for Proudfoot, it is the particular event of an experience that needs explanation. We saw that his advocacy of explanatory reduction is based on the analogy between religious experience and historical events. Religious experiences are seen as particular historical events to be explained. After describing Steven Bradley's religious experience, for example, its explanation is to be done in terms of the "Methodist revivalism in the early nineteenth-century New England, about the particular meeting he attended in the evening and about the events in his life up to that moment."[41] It is clear, therefore, that the proper object of explanation for Proudfoot is particular religious experiences, and they are to be explained in terms of social and other empirical factors. Upon this assumption, the work of a scholar of religion is simplified. He (the scholar) need not look for a theory of religious experience, or a considered understanding of what makes a religious experience *religious*. This is theoretical blindness.

Theoretical blindness, in turn, lends itself to reductionism of a problematic kind. Since there is nothing that makes a religious experience religious, other than the subject's own claim, and the subject's claim is accommodated at the level of descriptions, there is no reason why a scholar should not explain the increased heart rate of Bradley purely in physiological, sociological, or other empirical terms alone. This is reducing religious phenomena into something else. Such a reductionism would be unacceptable, not only to Bradley, the subject of experience, but to any believer because they do not consider their experiences to be fully explicable in natural terms. Given such reductions, one might ask: why to make the distinction between description and explanation at all, if the descriptions play no role in the explanation? One would have thought that non-reductive descriptions would provide a better understanding of religion or religious experience. In the absence of such guidance from non-reductive descriptions towards a non-reductive understanding of religion and mysticism, Proudfoot's injunction against descriptive reduction turns out to be nothing more than a psychological sop to the believer. Such descriptions, therefore, really play no role in his method. It is not surprising, therefore, that he should find the works of practically all religiously sensitive and enormously gifted intellectuals from Schleiermacher to William James, from Wittgenstein to Wittgensteinians like D. Z. Phillips merely as protective, apologetic strategy to immunize religion from outside criticism.

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[40] Proudfoot, *Religious Experience*, 197.

[41] Proudfoot, *Religious Experience*, 223.

6. Epistemic Rationality of Mysticism: A Proposal

It seems to me that if we are to make any further progress in examining the epistemic rationality of mysticism we need to adopt a more complex methodology that incorporates religious sensibility of Schleiermacher, the descriptive fidelity of James, the philosophical insight of the Wittgensteinians, and the analytic acumen of Proudfoot. The following three stages must be considered indispensable in such a methodology.

6.1. Description

We must begin with non-reductive descriptions, not descriptions as a psychological sop to the believer, but as the preliminary data from which to build a theory of religious and mystical experience. The theoretical blindness of the empiricists stems from their inability to see the distinction between individual religious experience and theory of what counts as religious experience. The importance of making such distinction is perhaps one of the finest contributions of Wittgenstein and the Wittgensteinians like Phillips and Norman Malcolm. They point out that any explanation and justification is done within a system of beliefs. Wittgenstein is explicit: "All testing, all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system."[42] Malcolm says: "*Within* a language-game there is justification and lack of justification, evidence and proof, mistakes and groundless opinions, good and bad reasoning, correct measurements and incorrect ones."[43]

He goes on to say that one "cannot properly apply these terms to a language-game itself."[44] This is a further point. Not only is justification done within a system but the system itself is beyond justification. There are some passages in Wittgenstein that suggest this.[45] Their contentions on whether the system itself is beyond justification or whether religion makes an autonomous system of beliefs are debatable points. It is these debatable claims that make them vulnerable to accusations of practising a protective strategy. But there is hardly anything debatable about the claim that any explanation is done within a system or that the system itself stands on a different logical footing than a belief within the system.

If all justification is done within a system, it is important to grasp nature of the system. In other words, before attempting to justify particular religious beliefs it is important to have an adequate theory of religious experience. Such theory-construction should be guided by non-reductive descriptions. But there lurks a problem. A particular event, a phenomena or an experience can be described. A particular historical event like the American attack on Iraq can be described (which may be described as it was experienced by a soldier involved in the war, or as experienced by a pro-Saddam Iraqi, etc.), but can one describe history? My experience of the rising sun can be described, but can one describe perception as such?

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[42] See, for example, L. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. Denis Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe, New York/Evanston: J. & J. Harper Editions, 1969, 105.

[43] N. Malcolm, "The Groundless Belief," in Stuart C. Brown ed., *Reason and Religion*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977, 151. For more on Wittegenstein and the Wittgensteinian approach to religion, see Karuvelil, "Some Problems in the Epistemology of Religion" and P. Sherry, *Religion, Truth and Language-Games*, London: The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1977.

[44] N. Malcolm, "The Groundless Belief," 151.

[45] See, for example, L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958 and 1988, IIxi, 200, 217, 654.

The religious experience of Steven Bradley can be described, but how does one describe religious experience as such? Unlike the Iraq war or the experience of Bradley, there is no one experience to be described. It is a whole class (if not classes!) of experiences that needs to be described. Describing particular experiences and explaining the same with no reference to the system in which the particular experience occurs, therefore, is not enough. Having described (non-reductively, in the manner advocated by Proudfoot) as many and as varied religious experiences as possible or required, we must attempt to provide a coherent account of those experiences. The aim here is to provide a *theory* of religious experience that maintains the religious nature of experience without reducing it into something else. That would give us the system within which the rationality of individual claims is examined.

6.2. Explanation and Interpretation

It is in trying to provide a coherent account of these varied experiences that the role of explanatory reduction comes into picture. Such reduction is merely an acknowledgement of the fact that religious experiences, and the background beliefs within which those experiences arise, are so varied that they cannot all be combined into one mega-system of religious beliefs. Therefore, in providing a theoretical explanation of religion, one may have to disregard some aspects of the particular belief system of the subject. On the other hand, such explanations should not be so far off the mark as to lose the religious character of the experience being explained. For example, the fact that no believer would hold his religious experience to be totally explicable in natural terms is part of the phenomena that cannot be neglected in any adequate explanation of religion. So is the widespread occurrence of unitive mystical experiences, irrespective of whether or not they are to be taken as the core of mysticism. Further, there is also the fact that most mystical experiences are heavily influenced by empirical factors such as background religious beliefs. The task of a theory of religious experience is precisely to explain these seemingly contradictory phenomena in a coherent fashion. In other words, the theorist should remain faithful to descriptions as much as possible; it is the descriptions that guide the explanation, even when all particular aspects of those descriptions cannot be taken into account. The result would be what John

Hick calls a "religious interpretation of religion."[46] Both interpretation and explanation will have had a role in constructing such a theory of religion. Such a theory would be an explication of the nature of what the Wittgensteinians call a religious language game. The debatable issue of whether religious language game is an autonomous one needs to be decided on the basis of the descriptions and will be part of a comprehensive theory of religion.

6.3. Justification

A theoretical work on religious experience is not something that is attempted either by the Wittgensteinians or the empiricists. Wittgenstenians remain at the general level of affirming the autonomy of religious language and experience without attempting a theory of religion. They acknowledge religion to be an autonomous language game, but the contours of such a language game are not explored. The empiricists, on the other hand, remain at the level of descriptions without being able to use those descriptions to build a religious theory. Accordingly, neither of them makes, nor need to make, a distinction between explanation and interpretation, on the one hand, and justification of beliefs, on the other. But once a religious theory of religious experience is in place we might also realize that explanation needs to be distinguished from justification, because a "religious interpretation of religion" still remains at the level of understanding. An explanation provided for a particular phenomenon at this level may be a genetic one, purely in terms of the natural factors. But the circumstances leading to the origin of beliefs says nothing about their truth. Therefore, we need to distinguish discovery from justification, understanding and interpretation from the truth of the matter. Deikman's theory of de-automatization provides a good explanation of how mystical experiences come about, but not the justification of what is revealed in mystical experiences. We must not confuse, then, matters of explanation and interpretation with justification and evidence. Interpretation is a matter of coherence, a matter of reflective equilibrium, as Proudfoot rightly recognizes, but justification is a matter of logic and evidence.[47]

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[46] John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent*, New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989.

[47] Although Reflective Equilibrium is usually understood as a method of justification, I suggest that it is more properly understood as a method of discovery, a

7. Conclusion

This study, though very limited, has hopefully helped to clarify some of the issues involved discussing the rationality of mysticism. Of the different senses of 'rationality' we have considered the most intractable is the epistemic sense. If there is an obvious lesson to be learned from our discussion of epistemic rationality, it would be recognition of the complexity of the matter. Mysticism or, more broadly, religion is a complex phenomenon, as complex as human life itself. Therefore, discussing their rationality needs to reflect that complexity. But not all our problems are due to the complexity of the subject matter; some of the problems are also due to the Cartesian roots of modern epistemology. Further, the fact that for centuries discussions of mysticism remained within the confines of theology has not helped the matters either.

Learning from those who have attempted to deal with these matters, I have suggested a complex methodology for examining the rationality of mysticism. In keeping with the complexity of the subject matter, it is a route that makes room for description, interpretation and explanation and, finally, a logical procedure of justification that is not content with coherence of interpretations and reflective equilibrium. This route is definitely a long one, but one that seems more promising than any we have considered. Until we employ such a complex methodology, it is not likely that our discussion of the rationality of mysticism and religious experience would make much headway.

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matter of gaining insight. For more on the method of Reflective Equilibrium, see Karuvelil, "Reflective Equilibrium," in *Philosophical Methods*, ed. Johnson Puthenpurackal, Bangalore: ATC, 2004. I must confess that at the time of writing the above said article, I had not yet realized the need to critique the claim that Reflective Equilibrium is a method of justification.

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CROSSING THE THRESHOLD OF REASON

Kurian Perumpallikunnel[♦]

1. Introduction

Among the many definitions through which human beings tried to assess themselves, "*homo animal rationale est*" (man is a rational animal) stands out prominently. The rationale behind naming the currently thriving human race, *homo sapiens*,[1] may also be the same, i.e., our pride in being rational. If it is the reasoning capability that singles out our human race from the rest of the animal kingdom, then the absence of it, or a refusal to keep it operational, may have a degenerative effect on our human nature and essence. Being 'rational', human beings show an innate tendency to search for reasons behind everything they happen to experience. That may be why followers of every religion and "ism" are trying to prove the rationality behind their stance. However, we know that reasoning comes only after experiencing. Without experience, there is no room for reasoning. Mystics often try to explain their experiences logically and scientifically, while lamenting that their experiences are incommunicable. acclamation

2. Some Radical Questions Concerning Scientific Rationality

This naturally gives rise to a few logical questions: Should everything be proved rationally and scientifically in order to be acceptable? What is it

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[1] *Homo sapiens*, "man the wise," is the only currently existing species of the genus *Homo*. They are distinguished from other animals and from earlier hominid species by characteristics such as bipedal stance and gait, brain capacity averaging about 1,350 cubic cm (82 cubic inches), high forehead, small teeth and jaw, defined chin, construction and use of tools, and ability to make use of symbols such as language and writing. Their immediate ancestor, *Homo erectus*, possessed some of these features but taken together they are characteristic only of *Homo sapiens*.

that makes science rational? Do the intellectual procedures that scientists employ to investigate and explain natural phenomena, and the tools they use, have definite and objective intellectual merits that make their adoption rationally prudent, wise, and obligatory? In answering these questions, some hold the view that the rationality of scientific procedures depends solely on the formal validity or logicality of scientific arguments, which is validated by the final outcome. Then another question arises: What about the roles played by intuition, guesswork, and chance in scientific investigation? It is obvious that such things often contributed significantly towards scientists' intellectual creativity other than mere rationality. People like Michael Polanyi,[2] a Hungarian scientist and philosopher, argue that scientists are sleepwalkers whose creative insight guides them to intellectual destinations that they could never clearly see or state beforehand. An overemphasis on logic and rationality, they claim, would take away the freedom and destroy the creative fertility of a scientist. An excessive preoccupation with the rationality of scientific procedures may clip the wings of imagination and would confine scientists to stereotyped procedures. According to this view, rather than subjecting one's scientific intuition to the barren intellectual accountancy one should embrace a romantic anti-rationalism. However, these procedures of intellectual investigation in science and mathematics are not essentially non-rational. Chance, for instance, may help to bring relevant material to a scientist's attention. Yet, one should be aware that chances are nothing but favours received by a prepared mind. Similarly, only a person with a well trained mind can afford to give free rein to his intellectual imagination because he will be best qualified to appraise the rational context of his current problems and to recognize significant clues, promising new lines of analysis, or possible answers to his questions, as they come to mind.

2.1. A Paradigm Shift

Attitudes toward mysticism have been considerably modified since the middle of the 20th century as a result of the awareness of subliminal consciousness, extrasensory perceptions, and, above all, of an evolutionary perspective. Taking the lead from Darwin, Teilhard de Chardin[3] proposed that evolution does have a definite direction – from less to more organised forms of life and consciousness. He assumed that if evolution had been directed by blind chance only, then life would not have been able to develop in one direction of highly organised growth. There must be something more than "blind" chance. Consciousness would not have been able to 'appear' if it had not already been present in previous "animate" and "inanimate" forms of reality. Therefore, according to Chardin, it is reasonable to presume that consciousness directs the whole process of evolution from the very beginning. Subsequently, Chardin projected the process of evolution into the future. He predicted that all the evolutionary processes would meet in an omega-point – God, where the entire creation could find unity and oneness. This makes God the ultimate (the first and the last) reason of evolution, not simply to be an active reason or alpha-point. Thus, according to Chardin, *Homo sapiens* resemble caterpillars on the eve of their turning into butterflies – into beings of totally different nature or "consciousness" (*cosmic consciousness*).[4]

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[2] Michael Polanyi's theory of personal knowledge, with its levels of being and of knowing, holds the opinion that none of those levels of knowledge is wholly intelligible to those that they describe. M. Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post Critical Philosophy*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1974, 7.

The 20th century crises and the mass media suggest the possibility of a mysticism, brought up-to-date, which would serve 'the Creative Intention' that past ages called God. Thus, we notice a renewed interest in mysticism and even a mood of expectancy similar to that, which marked its role in previous eras. Such a mood stems in part from the feeling of alienation that many individuals experience in the modern world. Put down as a religion of the elite, mysticism is said by many to belong to everybody, though few use it. Among the proponents of New Age spirituality, mysticism turned out to be one of the most important topics of concern. "The Christian of the future will be a mystic or he/she will not exist at all... By mysticism we mean a genuine experience of God emerging from the very heart of our existence." This quotation, ascribed to an eminent Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner, has also played a part in arousing a renewed desire among Christians to rediscover mysticism and to keep up with the signs of the times.

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[3] Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), French philosopher and palaeontologist is known for his theory that man is evolving, mentally and socially. See T. de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, New York: Harvest Books, 1974, 173ff.

[4] Teilhard wrote his two major works in this area, *Le Milieu divin* (1957; *The Divine Milieu*) and *Le Phénomène humain* (1955; *The Phenomenon of Man*), in the 1920s and 1930s, but their publication was forbidden by the Jesuit order during his lifetime. Among his other writings are collections of philosophical essays, such as *L'Apparition de l'homme* (1956; *The Appearance of Man*), *La Vision du passé* (1957; *The Vision of the Past*), and *Science et Christ* (1965; *Science and Christ*).

However, in contrast to this growing trend, there exists another group among scientific rationalists, which tends to discard mysticism, religion, and even philosophy as outdated vestigial appendages of the evolutionary past. They divide human history broadly into three periods based on the levels of human understanding and intellectual maturity. The first phase, age of religions and mystics, was that of superstitions and beliefs. The second, age of philosophy, was a period of scholarly inquisitiveness and rational investigation. The third and the final phase of human developmental history – age of science – is that of painstaking analysis and conclusive discoveries. Those diehard rationalists who elevated reason to an idolatrous supreme authority refused to validate the claims of human experience and its encounter with extrasensory realities unless and until a scientific rational process verified and endorsed them. There was also a belief among the general public that mysticism was associated with parapsychology, spiritualism, clairvoyance, and mumbo jumbo. The conservative rationalists, who brand mysticism as inimical to reason and anti-progressive, insist that mystical experience should meet scientific standards in order to rid society of enthusiasm and excess. However, there is a real danger that this obsessive attitude of the defenders of scientific rightness could seriously hamper human creativity, freedom, and intuition. This article is an attempt to examine whether, or to what extent, we are entitled to cross the threshold of reason.

In the process, we shall examine the standpoints of mystics as well as the merits and the limits of reason, and see how secure we are to cross the threshold of reason to tread the fairytale land of mystics. It is evident that experience cannot be self-authenticating. As it is prone to error and misunderstanding, experience ought to have a socially validating dimension. A sincere effort to give an account of all the data of experience without regulating or distorting it results in an ongoing process of communication, which results in interaction and comparison of judgements.[5] Reasoning in a scientific sense is the search for the premises of the demonstration that will prove and, thus, explain a certain 'fact'.

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[5] E. T. Long, "Quest for Transcendence," *The Review of Metaphysics* 205: 52, 1 (September 1998), 6.

Scientific analysis is the progression from the knowledge of a 'mere fact' to the knowledge of the 'reasoned fact'.

2.2. Potentials of Human Brain

Modern brain research has disclosed astonishing new facts about the functioning of human brain.[6] The two cerebral hemispheres, though linked to each other in normal people by a thin strand of tissues, pursue markedly different specializations in their modes of cognition. Though oversimplified, it is roughly correct to say that one hemisphere is predominantly analytical and the other "synthetical" (holistic, intuitive). These and other modern findings in brain research have made untenable the claim of some philosophical ultra-rationalists who deny that a thing is not worth knowing unless it can be known through analysis. Scientific progress is now understood to depend partly upon those spontaneous flashes of insight that bestow a whole vision of reality upon the well-prepared mind. Einstein himself is known for having, in his most creative moments, resorted to mental images rather than Aristotelian logic. Taking into account such, not just convincing but overwhelming, examples can we still maintain that the analytical is the only valid mode of cognition? Can we still assert that mathematics and scientific theory exclude paradoxical descriptions of the world and the mind?

Human reason is a faculty of the mind that cannot help but strive to attain access to something unconditional and absolute that is inaccessible to the modern, critical intellect. The human quest for answers is not satisfied with learning the real cause of things within the world. The search continues for the real cause of the world as a whole, not just what it is, but even more so, why is it at all?[7] In other words, mind has a tendency to extend its search beyond physics. As Kant points out, "in all men ... there has always existed and will *always* continue to exist some kind of metaphysics."[8] For Kant, every question raised by a human being implies that person's tacit longing to unlock the secrets of the universe in its totality. In other words, Kant maintains that man's occupation with physics is, in fact, triggered by his preoccupation with metaphysics. However, he concludes that since all the objects available to our reason are within the conditioned world, humanity has to endure a life of paradox – on the one hand, assuming that we will one day be able to grasp the essence of the universe in its unconditional totality and, on the other, never be able to reach that goal, i.e., we are destined to live a life of make-believe! In other words, we have to learn to live a life of *fürwahrhalten* (holding-to-be-true),[9] a life subjectively grounded on faith and hope. This subjective theology of Kant made him say, "every human being makes a God for himself ... in order to honour Him *the one who created him*."[10] Not surprisingly, this solution found few adherents. His disciple Schelling alternatively tried to promote the concept of a primordial, prereflective, and unconditional "absolute I" which was gradually and progressively self-disclosing in the course of history. This 'I' exposed the possibility of a purely intuitive knowledge, besides the knowledge acquired by means of the discursive intellect.[11] Hegel, in his turn, tried to quench the human thirst for reason by proposing and promoting a kind of metaphysical amnesia. His was an attempt to confine human reason to the concerns of the immanent world. However, his philosophy was ill-equipped to answer the ultimate question, "why is there anything at all, why is there not nothing?"

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[6] J. Shreeve, "Beyond the Brain," *National Geographic Magazine*, March 2005, 2-31.

[7] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle,* ed. R. McKeon, New York: Random House, 1941, 1.1.980a1-1.3.983b1; Plato, *Symposium*, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961, 211d and following; Plato, *Republic*, trans. A. Bloom, New York: Basic Books, 1969, 485b and following.

2.3. Head versus Heart

Is it rationally possible to explain and comprehend mysticism? Is "Rationality of Mysticism" a logical concept? Is it necessary to maintain an opposition between the rational way of thinking and intuitive experience culminating in what the mystics have tried to express? Can they both have their place and coexist? Is the sharp dichotomy between scientific and mystical knowledge real? Does it in anyway enhance and augment human progress? These questions could be addressed from a philosopher's/scientist's point of view or from that of a mystic. From the point of view of a philosopher/scientist, any experience, which is not reflected upon or proved, is worthless and subhuman. From the viewpoint of mystics, philosophers/scientists are like chemists who have never tasted honey but go on analysing it in their laboratory to understand it! According to mystics, a librarian may be capable of categorizing and systematically displaying the books of an author, yet he may not have any idea of the agony and the ecstasy the author experienced during their creation.

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[8] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N. K. Smith, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965, B21.

[9] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A820/B848 and following.

[10] Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings*, ed. A. Wood and G. di Giovanni, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 165.

[11] F. W. J. Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, trans. A. Bowie Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 152-3.

Obviously, in this setting, making an effort to explain the rationality of mysticism is almost like trying to solve the impossible riddle of "Which comes first, chicken or egg?" The response will correspond to the predisposition of the respondent. Reason or rationality often reminds us of systematic intellectual activity and logical inference, which, as noted earlier, is one of the essential faculties that makes us truly human, and is often associated with our head. Feelings, emotions, experiences, sensations, perceptions, etc., are all attributed to the heart, which connects us to realities, both seen and unseen, and enables us to apprehend intuitively the fundamental truths regarding reality. In both secular and religious senses reason is often in opposition to sensations and feelings. There is a belief that the 'reasoning head' often fails to understand the 'experiencing heart' – a basic inner conflict! 'Head' has a tendency to shun everything that lacks logic as 'irrational,' while 'heart' has its own feeling and conclusions based on experiences and intuitions, which transcend intellectual reasoning that is merely based on known premises. Now, let us examine how far we can support and sustain this conflict and duality within ourselves if such a situation truly exists.

3. What is Mysticism and Is It Probable?

The word mystic is from the Greek *mysis*, meaning, closing of the eyes. To define is to limit, and no single definition will cover every aspect of mysticism. Some object to the word itself and hold that 'enlightenment', 'illumination', or 'awakening' might be better. Dictionaries define mysticism as follows: (1) The doctrine or belief that direct knowledge of God, of spiritual truth, etc., is attainable through immediate intuition or insight and in a way differing from ordinary sense perception or the use of logical reason; as, nature *mysticism.* (2) Any type of theory asserting the possibility of attaining knowledge or power through faith or spiritual insight. (3) Vague speculation. These definitions suggest that there is a kind of knowledge that is derived from *experiential* awareness of a transcendental reality. Mysticism is, thus, a belief in a third kind of knowledge, the other two being sense knowledge and knowledge by inference.[12]

An urge for transcendence seems to be innate to human nature.[13] The word transcendence means to go beyond or above a limit of some kind, to surpass or excel. Our experience of ourselves as beings-in-the-world is very much interrelated to other beings and things. We are aware of ourselves not as fixed essences, but as unfinished, in the process of becoming. As Heidegger portrays, we human beings are both fact and possibility. Our being is something to be achieved; it is something to be gained or lost. We are beings on the way, transcending boundaries, moving towards new possibilities.[14] In that case, where does mysticism fit in? Is it opening new horizons for the human potential?

3.1. Mysticism: A Search into the Unknown

Though mysticism may be associated with religion, it need not be. Mysticism has been the core of Hinduism and Buddhism; however, it has been little more than a minor strand, and frequently, a disturbing element, in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Though it validates religion, mysticism also tends to escape the fetters of organized religion. Mysticism shares a common world with magic, prayer, worship, religion, metaphysics, and even science. It may not always be easy to distinguish mysticism from these, but for its different approach and emphasis. Elements of magic, psychism, voices and visions, and powers of the occult (*siddhis*) are not of interest to genuine mystics, who often warn against the dangers associated with them. Prayer and worship may form part of mysticism, but they are viewed as means and not as essence. In a religious sense, mysticism is the result of aspiration for or encounter with the unknown that lies beyond appearances.

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[12] See, www.thefreedictionary.com/mysticism and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mysticism.

[13] J. Chu, B. Liston, *et al.*, "The God Gene," *Time*, November 29, 2004, 48-56.

[14] Long, "Quest for Transcendence," 7.

We have already noted that the goal of mysticism is either union with the divine or liberation from *avidya* (ignorance of the true nature of reality). The apparent tendency of mystics for self-negation is explained as part of a psychological process or strategy that does not really deny the person but opens one's eyes towards a wider perspective of reality. In spite of a lunatic fringe, more advanced proponents of mysticism claim that it can satisfy rationality. There is obviously something non-mental, non-logical, paradoxical, and unpredictable about mystical phenomena, but it is not, therefore, irrational or antirational. If there is a mystery about mystical experience, it is something it shares with life and consciousness. Mysticism is, in fact, a deep search into the unknown. It indicates that man is a complex reality.

3.2. Characteristic Features of Mystical Experience

Mystical experience does exist. It has to do with a shift in the state of consciousness, evidently not just in the emotional but also in the cognitive dimension, like a shift from sleep to wakefulness (which is, in fact, a frequent metaphor in mystical literature). Mystics in different places, times, or traditions could be broadly divided into two groups based on their interpretation of their own mystical experiences. They have attributed the *source* of their mystical experience to either God, or the self, and similarly, claim to have achieved *knowledge* of either God, or the self. William James in his classic 1902 work *The Varieties of Religious Experience* defines mysticism as an experience that meets four criteria: *It is ineffable*, that is, difficult or impossible to convey in ordinary language. *It is noetic*, meaning that it seems to reveal deep, profound truth. *It is transient*, rarely lasting for more than an hour or so. Moreover, *it is a passive* state, in which one feels gripped by a force much greater than oneself. Two qualities that James did not include in his formal list but mentioned elsewhere by him are *blissfulness* and *Cosmic Consciousness.*[15] Mystical experiences are not just transient flashes of insight but are capable of causing a permanent shift in the consciousness of an individual. As a result, such a person may feel not passive but powerful, and the power seems to come from inside rather than outside. While some mystics feel a blissful unity with all things, others perceive absolute reality as terrifyingly alien. Certain mystics describe their experience as a form of ecstatic forgetfulness or self-dissolution rather than of knowing. The following are the chief characteristics of mystical experience: experience of unity, intense affective experience, time/space distortion, noetic quality, ineffability, and a sense of holiness or sacredness. In addition, the mystics sometimes include the concept of universality in their descriptions.

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[15] W. James. "*The Varieties of Religious Experience*," Elibron Classics Series, New York: Adamant Media Corporation, 2005, 60ff.

3.3. Traditional Stages along the Mystical Path

Mysticism can refer to a way of life in which this knowledge is found. As such, it has classically been described as having various stages. The first of these was frequently called the 'purgative' way, i.e., one characterized by persons' turning away from undesirable passions in repentance and by active practice of virtues and asceticism. By asceticism here is meant effort to act counter to the roots of enslaving attachments and, thus, to be more in control of such desires or passions that lead to bondage. The second was called the 'illuminative' way, a stage in which person's practice of the virtues was more prominent than the turning away from addictions; their prayer was characterized by a greater simplicity and affectivity and the beginnings of mystical prayer, and they experienced what John of the Cross calls "the night of the senses,"[16] that is, a passive purification of the heart operating beyond that which they were able to achieve, under grace, by their active efforts. The third stage was called the 'unitive' way and was characterized by the experience of profounder purifications, both internal and external, "the night of the spirit," a prayer that was more passive or subject to God's presence, even though experienced in the darkness of faith. The union experienced by such mystics was described at times as 'mystical marriage'.

3.4. Various Types of Mystical Experiences

There are at least three major forms of mystical experience that cannot be identified with one another: The first is 'cosmic consciousness', found preeminently in Hinduism. According to this type of mysticism, the absolute is not only transcendent but also immanent, all in one. To come to this realization means to come to a living awareness that *Ātman* (the individual self) is *Brahman* (cosmic self). As rivers merge into the ocean, leaving behind their *nāma rūpa* (name and form), *ātman* has to reach its home. What is intended here is not a *personal* union in which both the individual self and the Absolute retain their own identities. Another type of mysticism is a 'personal union' mysticism, characteristic of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. The third type is the 'mysticism of nothingness' or 'silence', primarily found in Buddhism. This releases a person from the possibility of an endless series of deaths and rebirths through obstructing the cause and, thus, cancelling the effect. It is called *nirvāṇa*, the 'extinguishing' of the flame of desire.

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[16] A. Kurian, *Ascent to Nothingness*, London: St. Paul's, 2000, 115-177.

Certain other types of mysticism, however, would seem to strive toward a naked encounter with the 'Whole', without and beyond symbols. Of this kind of direct apprehension of the absolute, introvertive mysticism offers examples from different times and traditions. Instead of looking out, the gaze turns inward, toward the unchanging, the undifferentiated *advaita* – one without a second. The process by which this state is attained is through a blotting out or suppression of all physical sensations – indeed, of the entire empirical content of consciousness. *Cittavṛttinirōdha* (stopping of mind fluctuation) was how Patañjali described it. The model of introvertive mysticism comes from the Maṇdokya Upaniṣad, which insists on the existence of a fourth state of mind (*tūrya*), which can receive knowledge that "is not the knowledge of the senses, nor is it relative knowledge, nor yet inferential knowledge. Beyond the senses, beyond the understanding, beyond all expression is the *Fourth*. It is pure unitary consciousness wherein [all] awareness of the world and of multiplicity is completely obliterated. It is ineffable peace. It is the supreme good. It is One without a second. It is the Self" (Ma. Up. 7).

Mysticism, which seeks unity, though admits wide variations, falls into recognizable categories: mild and extreme, extrovertive and introvertive, and theistic and non-theistic, etc. Another well-known category – corresponding to the faculties of thinking, feeling, and willing – employs the Indian formula, the respective ways of knowledge (*jñāna*, head), devotion (*bhakti*, heart), and works (*karma*, hand). Claims have been made on behalf of each, though advanced mystics have tried to accord to each its place and to arrive at a synthesis as can be seen in the *Bhagavadgīta*. Depending on the attraction the intellectual/contemplative type tries to reach the Highest, the One, or the Godhead behind God. In their approach toward the supreme identity, there is a tendency to be cautious of multiplicity. For the emotional type of person, there is the mysticism of love and devotion. The theistic attitude, or devotional mysticism, depends upon mutual attraction. The path of devotion includes the rituals of prayer, worship, and adoration.

Christianity has produced an array of great mystics like Gregory of Nyssa (d. 395), Augustine (d. 430), Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153), Meister Eckhart (d. 1329), Teresa of Avila (d. 1582), John of the Cross (d. 1591), and others. Two distinct trends or traditions can be distinguished in their writings: the *kataphatic* and the *apophatic*. These two traditions are represented by Augustine and Gregory, respectively, though this distinction is not absolute, but only a matter of emphasis. The one describes this knowledge more in terms of light, while the latter describes it more in terms of darkness and 'not-knowing'. The word 'darkness' is among the commonest of all metaphors used by mystics.[17] This was the symbol by which they contrived to express the human inability to know God neither by sight nor by any other cognitive faculty. Dionysius the Areopagite, in his *Mystical Theology*, writes: "I pray we could come to this darkness so far above light! If only we lacked sight and knowledge so as to see, so as to know, unseeing and unknowing, that which lies beyond all vision and knowledge."[18] According to Dionysius, all beliefs about God are empty. With respect to God, there is neither knowledge, nor belief, nor description. However, the metaphor of 'darkness' does not refer to God but to mystical experience. It is a knowledge that is more the fruit of desire and love than intellectual study.

The proponents of non-theistic mysticism do not even admit the existence of a Supreme Being. According to them, verbal descriptions and analyses must all be tested against direct experience. Much of Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy is made up of a closely reasoned criticism of the ways in which unaided reason can mislead us. The position which is finally taken denies that even Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy (or, the Buddha, for that matter) can make any statements that are true in an absolute sense, that is, without regard to the context of the discussion or presuppositions of the speaker. The Absolute is for *experiencing* and *living* an order of reality prior to talking, analyzing, and making interpretations. Reason has its proper place and, rightly used, it is a magnificent tool. But each mystical practitioner must understand that to *talk about* is not the same as to *be*, and that the analytical, discriminating function of the mind may actually inhibit his/her direct experience of the source of existence deep within him/herself. We find in non-theistic mysticism a deep respect for reason, coupled with a refusal to acknowledge it as omnipotent. Non-theistic mystics seem to agree that there is some realm of human experience, which transcends or underlies rationality.

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[17] W. T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy*, London: Macmillan, 1960, 300.

[18] Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid, New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1987, 138.

3.5. Mystics and Their Viewpoints

Thomas Aquinas, the author of *Summa theologica,* after experiencing a supernatural vision by the end of his extraordinary intellectual career, is reported to have said: "All I have written is naught."[19] Even if it is difficult to describe visions and systematize them into a format, the direction in which mysticism points is clear: *relational transcendence*. There are numerous experiences that cannot be subjected to the present yardsticks of scientific scrutiny. In fact, science is lacking not only the proper scale to measure but also the method to detect the presence of such experiences because they are subjective and do not yield to objective inspection. Love, pain, feelings of awe, reverence, experiences of visions, voices, messages, guidance, as though from external or supernatural sources, experiences of events that seem miraculous or paranormal, experiences of supernatural influences, out-of-body experiences, mystical experiences of absolute unity, or nothingness, or non-duality, transpersonal experiences, experiences of awakening to the inner light, etc., are some such cases.

This prompts a logical question: Why is science pushing for impersonalism? Does everything have to be objective to be scientifically true? Do subjective experiences have any scientific value? Where does the problem lie? Is it with the subjective experiences or with the inability of science to measure subjective experience? Should we deny the existence of something just because we do not possess the proper scale to measure it? Suppose, at a later stage, science acquires the ability to measure the cerebral activities accurately and based on that data manages to decipher and reconstruct the feelings, emotions, and experiences that are going on within an individual's mind, what will happen to all the present denials of the scientists?

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[19] Cited in Boyle, Marjorie O'Rourke "Chaff: Thomas Aquinas's Repudiation of His *Opera omnia*," *New Literary History* 28, 2 (Spring 1997), 383-399.

4. Scientific Rationality: Recent Approaches

4.1. The New Age Theory of Reality as 'Chaotic'

Much has been written in recent years to the effect that science, in its upper reaches, merges into mysticism. It is often said, by certain New Age physicists and astronomers, that the traditional premises about order in nature, and the goal of objectivity in knowledge, are no longer justified. Proponents of this view argue that twentieth century advances in physics have demonstrated reality as 'chaotic' in its ultimate 'essence'. According to them, this supports the conclusion of arbitrariness at the very core of existence: a scientifically unpredictable interference by some transcendental 'holistic' force or Mind. Moreover, they would have us believe that the principle of indeterminacy necessarily implies a human species reflecting just such irrationality in its being. Moreover, they now add, the new chaos theory confirms what the mystics have been saying all along. Nature, at all levels, is without internal order. All is mystery, it seems, and we must seek new, more appropriate ways of tapping into the Creative Oneness above and beyond the chaos of 'knowable' experience. We are told that we must learn to *believe* in the 'unknowable', even though we can never know it in any scientifically predictable sense. Moreover, we must accept the 'fact' that observation and analysis are but crude and limited tools in our search for the mystical truth of transcendent chaos.

The foregoing has profound implications for the way we think about reality and about our existence within it. Perhaps, say many ordinary people, we should be listening to the mystics in our midst, if we want to understand our surroundings, and ourselves, rather than to those who profess to rely on reason and evidence. At the very least, according to this argument, we should be prepared to grant equal status to *both* the mystical and the scientific, especially in the life sciences. To do less is to reveal an arrogance and intolerance totally out of keeping with ideals of freedom and pluralism in the arena of ideas. The findings of the scientists are an indication of the possible limitations of the current paradigm of physics, of the conceptual and technical tools that, until now, have proven so successful in measuring relations in inorganic nature. They are not indications of the limitation of science itself!

4.2. Rationality and the Points of View of Philosophers and Scientists

Philosophers hold the view that the world is fully intelligible in its own terms. Scientists believe that everything is, in principle, conceptualizable and has no direct reference or concern for human welfare. However, they believe that humanity can solve its problems on its own. Among the philosophers themselves, we notice two groups of opposing points of view: the empiricists and the rationalists. Empiricists hold the view that sense experience is the sole source of knowledge, while rationalists hold the view that reason is the source of true knowledge. Scientists draw from both these views and base themselves on objective proofs that can be verified and repeated.

If the claims to extrasensory knowledge were true, from where would it have originated? Is it of internal origin, or is it from an external source? Are there any things such as innate ideas? The human brain is predisposed to acquire knowledge far beyond the ability of other animals. The human brain develops physically to contain many of the structural features that enable it to accommodate 'knowledge' in anticipation. This would lead us to assume that the brain encodes 'innate knowledge' of the world that was never learned through contact with the world. Does this open the door for mystical views? Even if such 'innate knowledge' exists (and there is as yet little proof that it does), it would only be yet another indirect way in which humans learn about the physical world. There is nothing exceptionally remarkable about that. Collecting information from people, referring to books, etc., are such indirect ways already in practice. In this case, the indirect path would be through our human (and pre-human!) evolutionary heritage from millions of years of interacting with the rest of the world. Even if some 'innate ideas' do exist, there is, therefore, no reason whatsoever to believe that we can discover the true nature of the universe through pure introspection (or intuition).

Moreover, even in the bizarre circumstance that the cells of our brains did in some way encode various 'theories of physics', we would be totally unjustified in accepting these theories as necessarily true. It would be anti-scientific to do so. At the very most, these 'innate theories' could only be accepted as hypotheses, to be tested and rationalized scientifically. As for the hypotheses that do 'pop into our minds', there are far more plausible explanations for their origins than to assume they are encoded in our genes! The very fact that one finds at every step in science a complete welter of *contrary* and *conflicting* hypotheses is sufficient to virtually rule out notions that any such definite hypotheses are hiding within us from birth, just waiting to be uncovered!

4.3. Attitudes and Their Socio-cultural Context

People conditioned to be comforted and satisfied by the apparent certainty of non-contestable beliefs feel distressed when confronted by a demand for evidence. Those who have learned early to expect the world to be a mysterious and confusing place feel no curiosity when confronted by contradiction. Without curiosity, there is no urge to look for better explanations, or to solve the problems thrown up by experience. Such people often justify their worldview by appealing to certain so-called mystical feelings, which they claim are prevalent everywhere. These feelings are of three kinds: (1) a sensation of awe or wonder at the marvels of existence; (2) an awareness of being part of something larger than oneself; and (3) an overpowering egocentrism which can readily persuade the ego in question that such perfection as is revealed in one's own complexity and felt purpose could not have come about by accident. But these are general *human* sensations, not merely *mystical* ones! It is wonder that drives the scientist to ask "how come?" and to seek an intellectually satisfying answer. The curiosity engendered by awe and wonder has fuelled the scientific progress at least since human beings discovered fire. The experience of being part of some larger entity – far from being uniquely mystical – is a scientifically predictable reflection within human consciousness of the evolutionary history, religious tradition, and socio-cultural context of the individual. The same is true of the egocentrism that renders us liable to view our own 'selves' as the consciously designed, ultimate products and central concerns of the universe. How could we *not* feel thus, given the natural origin of our species and its integral relationship to all aspects of its physical surroundings and to the organic web of life? Given our millennia-long legacy of the anthropocentrically oriented culture reflected in current society which, in turn, has shaped these 'selves' as surely as inherited genes have formed our organic building blocks. With such a background, how can we not think of ourselves as the centre?

New Age mystics claim to possess an understanding of science superior to that of the person operating within what they dismiss as the traditional positivist scientific perspective. They distinguish sharply between 'cold' rationality and their own emotionally motivated, intuitive search for the true 'meaning' of that 'holistic' reality beyond the merely phenomenal. They would limit cause-and-effect thinking (all of which they label as mechanistic and reductionist) to readily observable inorganic phenomena. Meaning, on the other hand, is supposedly derived from the mysterious 'essence' of reality and for the magical thinker the principle of cause-and-effect does not operate here. These New Age mystics often seem to believe that this 'essential' nature of existence is, at the same time, *both* chaotic and arbitrary and, therefore, inaccessible to the human instruments of reason and senses.

4.4. The Essential Characteristics of Scientific Rationality

There are certain basic principles on which scientific rationality is established. Undermining those principles would destroy the reliability of scientific rationality itself. They are: 1) the principle of hierarchy in nature; 2) the universality of cause and effect; 3) seeking regularities in experience through a rigorous objective testing; 4) a sceptical, agnostic stance toward those explanations of events that are not supported by evidence; 5) an inability to live comfortably with contradiction; 6) a belief in the communicability of knowledge; and 7) an awareness of the complexity of the human causal connections that makes life to *appear* at random.[20]

Primarily, scientific rationality recognizes a hierarchical ordering of systems of relations as we move from the sub-atomic particles studied by physics to the atoms of chemistry; then to the genes ordering organic life and, finally, to the subjects of the social sciences: instincts, conditioned reflexes or habits, social norms and cultural institutions. This means that it is the mystic's interpretations, which are simplistic, and reductionist in the correct sense of the words. Secondly, scientific rationality also recognizes a different kind of causality operating at the organic level from the mechanical push-pull governing cause and effect among inorganic relations. Ever since Darwin, we have come to understand more and more about how organic life has been shaped both by random mutations and the *consequences* of the organism's forays into its environment – consequences which then feed back to affect the species' future by determining which individuals live to reproduce. This is a *contingent*, or after-the-fact, kind of causality, which applies at the psychological and socio-cultural levels as well. A third crucial aspect of scientific rationality is its objectivity. Those scientists, true to their calling, are not looking for absolute truth nor is their overriding goal the *verification* of hypotheses. Science seeks to identify regularities in human experience by means of a *public* or objective process of testing hypotheses. For the scientist, there is no knowledge without regularities, and regularities claimed but undocumented by objective tests are not sufficiently reliable to be worthwhile or not safe as guides to further action. Fourthly, a personal commitment to scientific explanation is characterized by an uncompromising insistence on verifiable evidences and proofs. A fifth defining characteristic is an inability to live easily with contradiction. Like the feeling of wonder, this tension in humans in the face of the illogical has motivated scientists in knowledge-building throughout human history. A sixth characteristic of the scientific rationality is an acceptance of the defining function of symbols and concepts in human self-consciousness. Language was our great advantage in evolution by making knowledge communicable. Finally, the scientific rationality is based on the premise that much in life is *apparently* random; that is, it occurs because of complex chains of fortuitous circumstances far beyond our current means of observation and comprehension. On all these counts, the magical explanation of the mystic is the exact opposite, and it is fraught with internal contradictions as well.

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[20] P. D. Hutcheon, "Science and Mysticism: Are They Compatible?" *Humanist in Canada* (Winter 1996/97), 20-24.

5. Scientific Rationality vis-à-vis Mysticism

5.1. Limitations of Science

Science has already identified the possibility of a virtual life. With the help of powerful computers, real life situations can now be simulated. A recent science-fiction movie, *The Matrix* was pointing towards the possibility of such a situation, in which people caught up in the matrix, living virtual lives, believed that their lives were real. However, this is not at all a brand new concept. Hinduism and Buddhism have suggested such a possibility even before millennia. The concept of *māya* is conceiving our universe as a mental projection either of the *self* (with a lowercase 's') or of the *Self* (with an uppercase 'S'). However, there is a danger. This would give rise to a never-ending series of questions like: Are we imagining things? Are we truly awake? On the one hand, whose dream are we? Is our 'real' really real? On the other hand, are we hooked up to a computer, which interfaces beautifully with the afferent and efferent nerves of our brain, creating a virtual universe, where we live virtual lives? This kind of reasoning would take us back to the philosophising of Buddha and Śaṅkara. Science cannot exist without a ground, whereas philosophy and mysticism can survive even in a vacuum, as long as there is a thinking mind.

How can we say that something does not exist just because we do not have any knowledge of it? We recognise the reality of things from their effects even when we do not experience their presence by means of our five senses. The x-rays, the ultra sonic sounds, the infrared rays, are all beyond our sense perception. However, we know their presence from their effects. Science authenticates their presence through repeated experiments. A blind person may not be able to recognize colour. Nevertheless, that does not mean that he could never know the presence of colours. By presenting various objects before those who have sight, and comparing their testimony, he can verify the probability of the presence of colours. If their testimonies correspond then he can infer that their claims have objective foundation. If the mystics had some extrasensory, out-of-the-world experiences, the effects of those experiences would be evident in their lives, even if they fail to communicate those verbally. These effects ought to be repeatable and universal. What science lacks at present is the 'tools' to access the realm of subjectivity. We need 'tools' to access and assess both the realms of rationality and intuition, tools that could describe the seemingly polar facets of consciousness, the rational and intuitive modes of operation.

5.2. Limitations of Mystics

A simple but devastatingly sceptical epistemological question is: how do mystics know they are right? How can we be sure that the deep, revelatory, sometimes even shattering experience of mystical union refers to anything in the world outside the person undergoing it? Part of the pull of mysticism is the noetic intuition of the mystic, during such an experience, which puts him/her in touch with some deep truth about the universe. However, how can this intuition be validated? Hallucinations, after all, are routinely mistaken for reality. There is an intimate connection between our experience and our physical brain. Our experiences can be altered by modifying the neural states responsible for consciousness, either by traditional non-invasive routes such as meditation and chant, or by drugs and newfangled electronic devices. Are mystical experiences the product of intentionally or unintentionally altered mental states of consciousness such as those produced in modern day experiments on the brain? Like dreams and hallucinations, are they not the result of human desires and fears, manias and phobias? Are they not coping mechanisms of the brain to contain the stress, strains, frustrations, and sufferings forced upon it by the day-to-day life? Is it an illusion created by the brain to avoid an imminent breakdown? Is it possible to confirm the veracity of the claims of mystical experience by any means? Mystics say that going through a mystical experience is the only way to prove it. Though the mystics lament their inability to express their experience in human language, they have left enough descriptions of their out-of-the-world experiences. Through comparing and contrasting these signs and symbols they have left for us, could we not determine their reality?

However, just because we *cannot say* where an idea came from or *cannot trace the steps*, which led us to a particular bit of knowledge, it does not necessarily follow that there were no steps. The mind works by applying its various computing processes, based on various architectures, to the data it receives from outside itself, i.e., from the world, via our various sense organs. Another point of concern is the source or origin of the mystical revelations, which mystics claim to have. Should we conclude that they are of external origin simply because we fail to trace their internal steps? Sometimes there may be subtle hints in a situation or circumstance that lead us unconsciously to an idea or result. Other times it may be that there is nothing suggestive in the *immediate* circumstances, but there may have been all sorts of relevant information gathered and stored (remembered) on prior occasions.

5.3. Is the Dichotomy between Rationality and Mysticism Real?

In discussions about mysticism and other forms of spiritual development several pairs of opposites are often mentioned. Examples of such pairs are rationalism-mysticism, reductionism-holism, and determinism-free will. In these discussions it is often assumed that there are two ways to view the world: the rational, reductionist, and deterministic view versus the mystic, holist, and intuitive one. Also other pairs are added: Western-Eastern, masculine-feminine, materialistic-spiritual, etc. However, a closer look will reveal that these pairs are only superficially opposed. We artificially split our awareness into compartments such as subject versus object, life versus death, mind versus body, inside versus outside, reason versus instinct, male versus female, etc. These compartmentalization and drawing of boundaries generate conflict and division.

The New Age mystics often exhibit a tendency to mystify people to an extent that their readers are discouraged from reasoning and questioning their propositions so much so that they are kept under perpetual confusion. One may wonder: Why is it that those magical mystics so often feel compelled to use language to explain what they maintain cannot be expressed with language? Why do they use arguments to prove what they themselves maintain cannot be proven by argument? Why do they try to enlighten others through rationality when their own theory asserts that this is not the way to accomplish it? A typical mystic would say, "I have a body but I am not my body, I have desires but I am not desires, I have emotions but I am not emotions, I have thoughts but I am not my thoughts." This kind of dichotomy can easily mystify and confuse a layperson. To avoid such confusion, it is prudent to interpret and understand everything in this world rationally or, in other words, to investigate and understand everything scientifically.

Fundamentally, rationality and mysticism are not opposites.[21] A rationalist makes statements only if these are based on logical thought. In mysticism, this is not the case; sometimes even some contradictory statements are made. Nevertheless, this pair is only apparently in opposition. Mysticism consists of experience. As such, it is neither rational nor irrational; but this experience can be studied in a rational way. Genuine mystics will not be against reason. What they would oppose is the tendency of certain sceptical rationalists, who deny the possibility of a deeper plunge than their measuring scale, can reach. Mystics are explorers while rationalists are analysts. Every new claim of discovery should be challenged and tested in the light of reason. Those that fail to withstand the test of reason are worthless. Those spiritualists who refuse to submit their findings to a thorough scrutiny do not commit themselves to accuracy. It is equally wrong to deny merit to things simply because they do not yield to the light of reason or do not fall under any known category. It may happen that the light is not bright enough to appraise the substance under scrutiny or may belong to another category that remains hitherto unknown. A rationalist may object that even if the statements of a mystic may not be impossible, there is no logical ground for them. The supporters of mysticism refute this objection by pointing out that the statements of mystics are *empirical*, based on the experience of a transformed consciousness. The only way out is to develop 'tools' to measure the mystical claims. This indicates that mysticism and rationality are not incompatible. Both are based on a refinement of the human mind, albeit in somewhat different direction. At this stage, it is important to be cautious not to confuse rationality with ratiocination and mysticism with mystification.

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[21] H. Barendregt, "Mysticism and Beyond Buddhist Phenomenology," *The Eastern Buddhist*, 29 (1996), 262-287.

6. Towards an Integral Outlook

6.1. The Middle Way

Mystics are often denounced as hostile to reason and enemies of logic. However, most mystics, like most artists and musicians, have no particular hostility to the rational. Rather they choose to focus upon the realm of the non-rational, the intuitive, in order to sink more fully into the realm of what they are trying to experience directly. Like artists, poets, and musicians (and great scientists), mystics are at their best when they are able to employ their practical and analytical skills to formulate symbols that will convey to others at least some sense of what they have been experiencing. Hence, one is, sometimes, warned against the influence of rational thinking.

For most scientists a person is a mass of glimmering interactive molecules. This mass is both a product of a physical process and can be aware that it is a product of a physical process. According to them, this mass has no powers of divination. Rather it acts upon the stimuli made available to it through the five senses. Human beings share certain essential qualities with other members of the animal kingdom like sense perception. However, what make them unique are their superior intellectual powers, which provide them with the capacity for rational thought. The well-known definition of human being as a 'rational animal' bears witness to the value attached to the rationality of human beings. For studying this rationality and self-awareness, we require tools that are different from those we presently use in the realm of science. All living organisms and human beings, in particular, are more than the sum of their parts. Yet, they are wholly dependent upon their parts for their organic unity and activity. However, they are not identical with their body and, thus, not reducible to it. In the case of human beings, we observe that they are composed of two distinct things, an organic body with a specific genetic structure and a mind capable of rational, self-reflective thought. Is the human mind reducible to the functioning of the human brain? Is the cognitive functioning of a mind merely the firing of neurons in a cerebral cortex? Is it possible to explain self-reflective consciousness, intellectual understanding of abstract concepts, etc., in neuro-physical terms alone? Is it possible to reduce the properties displayed by human thought to the properties of matter? It is evident that cognitive functions depend upon sense perception and are often found localized in the brain. Yet, if the human mind is a *tabula rasa*, a clean slate, at its creation and is totally dependent on sensory experience of the surrounding environment, we will find it very difficult to explain many of the extraordinary phenomena that are evident among human beings. Many of our feelings, instincts, dreams, insights, intuitions, revelations, and enlightenments do not yield to the conclusion that they are all the result of discursive reasoning. This opens up the possibility of obtaining knowledge through other means. For example, innate knowledge passed on from generation to generation, containing senses other than the five commonly acknowledged ones, intervention of external sources that can infuse knowledge into a person sans sense mediation, etc. The Near-Death Experience (NDE) of people who recovered from clinical death,[22] and Extra Sensory Perceptions (ESP) like telepathy, point towards the possibility of obtaining knowledge through ways and means other than the conventional means of information. However, whatever may be the source, until and unless such knowledge is deciphered, verified, and validated by the mind's natural intellectual processes through reasoning it does not belong to conventional human knowledge.

6.2. Intuitions and Human Brain

The human brain is the result of millions of years of evolution. The beneficial mutations and modifications acquired in each generation were passed on to form instincts and similar natural inclinations, which often baffle scientists. Human intuition could be understood and explained from this point of view. The human brain is the depository of much information and experience acquired by the past generations. Being a 'super-computer', it is capable of doing much more than what is demanded of it. Sakundala Devi, known as a 'human computer', *intuitively* knows the answers to complicated mathematical problems which even advanced computers, with their incredible computing power, require time to solve.[23] The term '*intuitively*' could be misleading if someone had the impression that the solution is coming from nowhere. In this context, '*intuitive*' means that Sakundala Devi is not consciously making her brain calculate. Her brain does the work, without her active involvement. Similar '*intuitive*' abilities were reported as present even among certain types of mental patients. Now-a-days even though the computers are capable of giving us solutions to complicated problems within seconds, none of us considers them as having intuitive or instinctive knowledge.

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[22] T. Bushby, *Glimpses of Life Beyond Death*, Queensland: Joshua Books, 2004, 25.

Where science and scientists have gone wrong is in their underestimation of human potential as well as the absence of the right scale and measuring instruments to assess the field of human experience. If somebody denies the existence of atoms, since under his magnifying glass no atom appears, he should be advised to change his glass. Science has its limits and limitations. For example, does science have any grounds for its basic premises? To prove something precisely (i.e., mathematically, formally, or logically) means to derive it from original postulates. Original postulates and choices of observed data are always taken *a priori* (i.e., axioms as self-evident facts). Therefore, it is impossible to "prove" precisely their hypotheses even within the boundaries of science. They do not prove anything absolutely in science, but prove only in a certain limited or relative meaning. Openness to various possibilities is the most essential quality required of a scientist.

Reason is undoubtedly man's most valued quality. Our argument is intended to show merely that it is not all-powerful. The belief that it can become its own master and control its own development may destroy it. In order to use our reason intelligently, we must preserve that indispensable matrix of the uncontrolled and non-rational which is the only environment wherein reason can grow and operate effectively.

6.3. Signs and Symbols: Languages of Mysticism

Science needs proofs. However, at present the evidences that are available to us are merely signs and symbols (languages) offered by those who claim experience. It is obvious that the experience of a reality can be communicated only through signs and symbols. Disappointingly, those signs and symbols can only point towards the experience. Therefore, mysticism should be approached both as an art and a science. Science has not yet developed instruments to measure and interpret the experiences a person may be undergoing. The lack of experience often results in misinterpretation of the signs and symbols made available. The daring statements of Buddha, for example, are noteworthy in this regard. He is said to have instructed his disciples as follows:

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[23] www.webindia123.com/personal/scientist/devi.htm

> Do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. Do not believe in anything because it is spoken and rumoured by many. Do not believe in anything simply because it is found written in your religious books. Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers or elders. But after observation and analysis, when you find that anything agrees with reason, and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it. Rely not on the teacher, but on the teaching. Rely not on the words of the teaching, but on the spirit of the words. Rely not on the theory, but on the experience. Seek truth in meditation, not in mouldy books. Look in the sky to find the moon, not in the pond. Do not accept my words out of reverence, analyse them as goldsmith analyses gold by cutting, melting, scraping, and rubbing it.[24]

With tremendous confidence, he invited people to try his eightfold path in order to ensure enlightenment. It is said that many of his immediate followers really managed to acquire the experience that the Buddha envisaged. However, an unsettling suspicion soon emerges: if Buddhahood and *nirvāṇa* are universal possibilities why is it that millions of people who are ardently seeking after it fail to be enlightened?

7. Conclusion

Mysticism may follow from or lead towards rationalization, but they are not the same. Mysticism, like poetry, depends on paradoxes and an unusual use of language. Nature mysticism is another prominent variation found among poets and artists. This has often been described or dismissed as pantheism (the divine in all), though perhaps it is more than a simple assertion of identity. Science is analytic and discursive and expresses its findings in precise and abstract formulae. Knowledge whether it is spiritual or material is nothing but "justified true belief." Somebody's belief is scientifically justified when it meets the public, *rational* standards. In addition, the question of what is *true* in any sphere of belief is a scientific question. There are not two kinds of knowledge, the rational, and the 'non-rational' (or intuitive); there is only rational knowledge. If it is not rational, it is not knowledge, but merely a belief unsupported by verifiable facts.

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[24] www.members.tripod.com/ TarotCanada/BuddhasCrazyQuilt.html

A rational mysticism consistent with science would not demand, impossibly, that the organism relinquish its self, nor would it suppose that consciousness is pitted against the void. It would seek out mystical experience – the temporary suspension of selfhood – while acknowledging that such experience may not be a direct cognitive apprehension of reality. Rather, the mystical state could be understood as a result of an intentionally altered brain, and as such can be welcomed as a reinvigorating, non-cognitive experiential *affirmation* of what scientific theories show to be unquestionably the case: our essential and complete naturalistic connection to the universe. The organism, its self, its consciousness, and all its works arise out of the physical world, so the mystical intuition of unity, albeit non-cognitive, reflects this empirical truth about us. This sort of understanding of mysticism would drop the disdainful dismissal of the physical as 'mere' matter typical of many old fashioned mystics who think categorically that spiritual exists on a higher, more exalted plane than matter.

However, we are still going to face certain radical questions like: Do we really need a goal or purpose for living? Should there be a reason for everything? Is life worth living sans a goal to achieve (whether it is union with God, *nirvāṇa*, heaven, or enlightenment)? If a goal is indispensable for a meaningful existence, then what about the animals, plants, planets? Are they worthless since they do not consciously strive to achieve goals? Science cannot tackle these and similar questions. Certainly, we need the answers of science to our "how" questions, but just as surely many will find that only religion and mystics can answer our "why" questions. Therefore, would not "both-and" be a more reasonable choice than "either-or"? Yet, being *animal rationale* we have an obligation to put every bit of knowledge we acquire to a thorough rational analysis to make it fully and truly human. Because, there is every possibility that those who dare to cross the threshold of reason may end up in the quagmire of hallucinations and make believe instead of attaining illumination and enlightenment.

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THE EVOLUTION OF HUMAN SPIRITUALITY

Allen S. Maller◆

The concepts of progress and evolution were rare prior to recent times. Almost all human societies in the past thought in cyclical terms. If they ascribed a direction to long term historical development it was devolution and decay. A singular exception can be found in one of the five Confucian Classics, the *Book of Rites* 7.3, where it states: "Formerly the ancient kings had no houses. In winter they lived in caves which they had excavated and in summer in nests which they had framed. They did not yet know the transforming power of fire, but ate the fruits of plants and trees, and the (raw) flesh of birds and beasts, drinking their blood and swallowing their fur and feathers."[1] Another singular exception appears in the book of Geneses, where it states: "At that time humans began to invoke YHVH by name" (Gen. 4:26). Most of the rabbinic commentators translate the verb *hukhal* to mean 'profane', taking this as a negative statement. But 'began' is the more normal meaning of the verb. The Torah asserts that prior to Enosh humans did not practise religion with the divine insight of revelation that they did later. Mystical and spiritual experiences were interpreted by human intelligence without the benefit of prophetic revelation. In the spirit of this Torah insight, I offer the following reflection on the evolution of pre-historic spirituality.

All sentient beings are able to respond to the challenges of life. In each species some individuals respond to new environmental challenges better than others do; and their descendants increase. Some sentient beings that are conscious are capable of learning from the challenges of life. They can improve themselves. A few are even able to show others what they have learned and, thus, improve their group and their descendants' chances of survival. These species have developed cultural ways of meeting life's challenges. For many centuries it was thought that mankind's ability to use

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[1] *The Book of Rites*, Li Chi, trans. James Legge, Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publications, 2003.

tools was what made us unique. However, we now know that several different species (including birds) use tools and Chimps not only use but also make at least three different kinds of tools for different functions. Chimp tool use differs in different locations (a cultural, and not a genetic difference). Chimps also show signs of self-awareness by recognizing themselves in a mirror. So what makes us what we are?

First, we are a small group of hierarchically organized social primates. Any genes that enable the group (extended family and/or band) to function better will contribute to individual survival and reproduction. Second, the species that preceded Homo Sapiens and Homo Neanderthal have been evolving larger and larger brains for several million years. Eventually, two species, Homo Sapiens and Homo Neanderthal evolved and achieved self-conscious ways of meeting life's challenges through non-material, i.e., cultural and spiritual behaviours. (Homo Neanderthals were a relative of Homo Sapiens that co-inhabited Europe and parts of Western Asia with anatomically modern humans from about 120,000 to 29,000 years ago. HN were well adapted to the cold and were very muscular.) Increasing dependence on mental capacities became problematic for those individual HN and HS who malfunctioned mentally. Any genes that would help correct or ameliorate individual mental challenges would be selected for and would spread throughout the population.

Spiritual activities among HS have evolved over the last 120-160,000 years. If one takes seriously the Biblical claim that humanity was created in the Divine image, spiritual evolution testifies to the emergence of creatures who are co-creators of purpose-driven non-material responses to environmental and social challenges.

A great deal of unnecessary conflict and misunderstanding has been caused by the careless use of the terms 'human' and 'man' to describe the increasing number of fossil finds of tool-using biped species that may have been ancestral to Homo Sapiens. I shall try to refer to each distinct species by its scientific name only. Recent fossils found on Flores Island in Indonesia in September 2003 are from a new species of tool-using bipeds, named Homo Floresiensis that lived as recently as 20,000 years ago. They are not pigmy Homo Sapiens. They used fire (in use by pre-Homo Sapiens species for over half a million years) and made stone tools, but we do not yet know if there is any evidence of ritual burials, which are the earliest forms of non-material cultural activity. Most people think that the name 'human' or 'mankind' should be reserved only for our own species. Not using the name 'human' and 'man' carelessly might help resolve some of the conflict over the theory of evolution.

The evolution of spiritual activities that enhance the successful survival of humanity is not only concerned with enhancing the survival of our own species. With the recent domestication of plants and animals and the very recent industrial revolution, Homo Sapiens acquired a great deal of responsibility for the evolution of most of the species on the planet itself. Thus, the behaviour of religious people themselves now becomes a factor in the evolution of life on earth. Religious behaviours are evidence of self-conscious creative thought processes most people associate with Homo Sapiens. Religious behaviours are the creative responses of intelligent minds to certain challenges in life.

Homo Sapiens faced at least half a dozen different challenges over the last 150,000 years that stimulated spiritual developments that improved survival rates both for groups and individuals within the group. One of the greatest challenges to increased intellectual development is anxiety and self-imposed stress. The more HS can think about things, the greater the ability to produce anxiety and self-imposed stress that are debilitating by themselves, and also depress the immune system. Anything that reduces stress and anxiety increases survival rates for intelligent minds. Also, as successful groups got larger it became harder and harder to keep them from internal conflict and splitting. Larger groups, or groups with strong alliances, were more likely to win when there was inter-group conflict and had reduced negative affects from inbreeding. Anything that helped larger groups create bonds that were more than family and behavioural norms that were more than mimicking would increase survival rates. Individuals with a mild mental illness could not contribute much to a tribe or band. Anything that helped heal or integrate these individuals would help survival rates. These are some of the situations faced by a species that began using its mind more and more.

The first challenge is also the ultimate one: death. Homo Sapiens is the only living species that knows in advance that death is inevitable. Genesis 2:17 teaches: "on the day you eat it [the tree of knowledge of good and evil you will know] you will surely die." Elephants, Chimpanzees, and Orangutans have been observed to mourn for a dead child, but no other living species practices ritual burial. The intelligent minds of HS responded to the death of loved ones by creating funeral rites and rituals of ancestor worship. Evidence from Qafzeh cave in northern Israel of ritual burial and grave goods (red ochre and mollusc shells of an inedible species) goes back 100-120,000 years or more. These funeral rituals brought comfort and solace to the mourners. Funeral rituals also had the important effect of strengthening group solidarity at a time when leadership might be challenged and changing. Strengthening group solidarity reduced internal conflict and violence, thus, increasing the chances of raising children to adulthood.

Although other species also dream, the intelligent minds of HS creatively concluded that dreams about the dead showed that the dead were still active and could continue to help their descendants. Thus, departed spirits ought to be venerated and worshipped. It is possible that nomadic hunter-gatherer bands used the skulls of important individuals in community rituals for many centuries. Two HS skulls from Herto in Ethiopia, well worn through handling, have been dated to more than 140,000 years ago. These ritual activities strengthened feelings of kinship within and among hunter-gather bands enabling them to be more stable and to grow larger. This, in turn, increased the chances for survival of individuals within the more effective bands and clans. Ritual activities and ideas about help available from deceased ancestors reduced stress and anxiety and so led HS to expand the realm of spirits to the treatment of physical and mental ailments. We now know that anxiety and stress weaken the immune system and increase the chances of not surviving an otherwise survivable illness. Anything that reduces anxiety and stress increases survival rates. This is one key reason that religious behaviour became ubiquitous.

Illness, especially mental illnesses that tend to be chronic rather than fatal, provided serious challenges to the intelligent minds of HS. Epilepsy, Schizophrenia, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Phobias, Bipolar Disorders, and other brain diseases occur in at least 2-3% of the population worldwide. Thus, there should be at least one or two cases in every band of 50-100 people. Severe cases are very scary and disabling, but the intelligent minds of HS could respond to the challenge of mild cases with a variety of rituals and practices that served to alleviate the symptoms through mind-body interactions that we recognize today as placebo faith healing. Placebo faith healing works primarily by reducing pain through endorphin release and increasing the strength of an individual's immune response, which is weakened by stress and anxiety. Only HS are known to be capable of placebo spiritual healing. Among HS today only a minority of individuals are able to heal themselves with the aid of placebo faith healing. The hope that ritual can heal along with individuals' trust in a healer is a powerful factor that frequently brings about improvement. With the support of a community of believers, and a tradition that enhances their individual hope and trust, results would be even better. A cure, either short or long term, isn't the only outcome in faith healing. The ceremony itself can reduce many of the side effects of the illness such as depression, stress, anger, and negativity. This often ameliorates symptoms and brings relief. Chronic illness negatively affects the immune system and eventually increases death rates. Ritual faith healing ameliorates symptoms for many people in these types of situations. This reintegrates the 'possessed' into a support group and reduces stress, strengthens the immune system, and reduces death rates.

A tiny charismatic minority, who themselves had struggled successfully to overcome these diseases, may become guides to others. The Shaman guides, for example, undertook journeys into a realm of evil spirits who they believed had caused afflictions and effected cures. A 45-60,000 year old site in a cave at Shanidar, Iraq yielded the skeleton of a badly disabled older Homo Neanderthal that the excavator thought might be a Shaman. Since this individual could not hunt and support himself, he suggested that the man disfigured by his shrunken arm and damaged eye, was thought 'touched' by the spirits. Thus, he might have been able to communicate with them on behalf of the community. So the band had supported him, while he intervened with the spirits on their behalf. The bear skull found next to him, the red flowers piled upon his grave, and a ring of stones around the grave are all evidence of his ritual importance. His advanced age suggested that his HN group revered him for years.

Elders of each family unit, usually in the home, regularly carry on ancestor worship to this day in East Asian religions. Shamans, however, were called in as specialists for unusual situations. These Shamans were the first professionals, whose disciples were their most successful patients. Shamans in different bands and tribes most likely exchanged experiences and techniques with each other. Recent outcomes of psychotherapy studies have shown that Native American Healers have cure rates similar to those of modern clinical psychologists. The growing awareness of positive religious influences on restoring health has even entered medical school curricula. In 1995 alone, 17 American medical schools incorporated "patient spirituality" in their curricula; ten years later the number had increased to 101.

Brain diseases may be mysterious and scary but they are not contagious; infectious diseases are. The intelligent minds of HS observed the spread of disease by contact or proximity and concluded that dangerous invisible pollution could occur. The most obvious source of pollution was a new corpse. It could pollute its surroundings and the people it came in contact with. This pollution is contagious. Even second and third hand pollution is dangerous, though a very small amount is dangerous. Thus, action must be undertaken to isolate or purify what has become polluted. Fortunately, this can be done with specific rituals which serve to alleviate anxieties and stress caused by the spread of contagious diseases. Although newly dead corpses are the most potent source of contagion, fresh blood, especially menstrual blood and the blood of childbirth (a time of great danger to both mother and newborn due to infection) is also disturbing. By extension, other bodily issues like nocturnal emissions, running sores, and some activities like slaughter, and breaking taboos can also be viewed as polluting. Those who devoted themselves to restoring ritual purity achieved status and power. Their techniques and personalities were more bureaucratic than those of the charismatic Shamans, and so they were more likely to establish a hereditary priesthood. Ritually purifying things that were polluted became important to restoring a positive, hopeful and, therefore, healthy balance to society. Quarantining ritually polluted people and objects also sometimes reduced vulnerability to contagious diseases.

Without successful reproduction no species can flourish, or even survive. HS were as subject to the biological imperative to be fruitful and multiply as all other species. But the intelligent minds of HS knew the dangers of childbirth. Infant mortality rates in most tribes were more than one in four. The maternal death rate for every four births was more than one in ten. Pregnancy was highly desired, though birth was always accompanied by anxiety. Pregnant women naturally sought the physical help of their mothers and grandmothers who, in turn, sought the spiritual help of their departed mothers and grandmothers. Among the earliest gods were birth-goddesses. Small stone figures of very pregnant birth-goddesses often referred to as "Venus" figures go back to 30-35,000 years. They are the first examples of iconic religion. The worship of spirits within natural phenomena does not need iconic representation. But birth rarely took place in the open or in public. The birth-goddess needed to be present in some tangible way in order to ease the anxiety of women in labour. Even today in some African countries the maternal mortality rate is 3%. A woman who gave birth to 8 children had a one in four chance of dying from giving birth. Any band would benefit even if the presence of Goddesses reduced that mortality rate by only 5%. Wood carvings of birth-goddesses probably preceded stone statues by many millennia and may have originated 50-100,000 years ago.

Shamans also found that visual aids helped their patients relate to the mysterious struggle that the Shaman fought in the foreign spirit world. Since the spirits of animals were often involved both as friend and foe, much of prehistoric rock art (especially in difficult to access caves) probably relates to Shamanistic healing rites. Eventually, iconic representations of gods and spirits would become almost universal. In historic times these icons would be viewed by increasing numbers of people as representatives rather than incarnations of the Divine.

There was no reason to limit activities of spirits to the realm of the dead or the diseased. All natural phenomena could be motivated by spirit minds. Intelligent minds with self-awareness that can read the intentions and motivations of others can also project all kinds of motivations onto other people, animals, objects, and events. The movement of herds, the quantity of animals, fruits, and spring water, thunder, floods, and drought, indeed, everything that happens in nature can be ascribed to the will of the spirits. Gifts and offerings should be able to influence these spirits (intelligent minds do not like to admit to impotence) and so regular offerings should be made by a group/clan/tribe, to keep the natural forces friendly. Western anthropologists influenced by Christian thinking refer to these offerings as sacrifices. The biblical term *korban* is both more accurate and more insightful. The verb *l'karayv* means to draw near or to come close. A *korban* is a way to attach, engage or bind the human realm to the spirit realm. When food and drink are offered to another it is not a sacrifice. Food and liquid offerings are an invitation to a closer relationship. Especially during ceremonial occasions, food and drink serve to bring people together, including those who have been estranged from one another because of transgressions that have occurred. Thus, offerings to the Gods can help people who feel estranged from God return to a closer (*karayv*) relationship. The food offered to a God is usually eaten wholly or in part by those who contribute it or by the priests who offer it. The biblical God doesn't want grain or meat offerings (Psalm 40:7). Humans offer them, especially when they feel estranged from the Divine, in order to draw closer (*karayv*) to the Divine. Only human sacrifice should be called sacrifice. While human sacrifice was widespread in the past it was usually relatively rare.

Ritual specialists, who unlike charismatic Shamans are more likely to be administrator types, usually direct these offerings. As time goes on, the rites tend to become more complex and the necessary skills require more training. Those people performing complex rites easily become a hereditary caste of professional priests. They sometimes also offer an alternative type of leadership to that of the hunter/warrior types. Priests can become the custodians of the customary law of the tribe. Priests can offer advice to help in making important decisions by consulting the gods to determine their will. Fortune telling enables decision-makers to avoid the backlash of wrong decisions while claiming credit for the good ones. Divination also reduces many people's anxiety about difficult decisions in unclear situations. Even today millions of Americans still consult astrology charts and in Asia people in many Buddhist temples still cast their fortunes.

Most people feel better when they are in control of the important factors in their lives. The strong desire for control coupled with belief in good and evil spirits eventually leads some HS intelligent minds to attempt to force a spirit do what an individual wants it to do. Magic is an attempt to subjugate a force in the spiritual world for another person's weal or woe. Magic is always dangerous because people believe that the spirits do not like to be enslaved by humans and power tends to corrupt even those with good intentions. Yet many tribal religions still have lots of room for defensive magic and even those religions that condemn magic have occasional practitioners. Again, the mind-body placebo effect makes magic effective in some societies where belief in magic and superstitions is widespread and accepted. Accusations of magic and witchcraft are also widespread in some tribal societies. They can be the result of paranoia or 'scapegoating' as often, if not more often, than the actual incidence of magic. Magic and superstitions are the dark side of HS spirituality.

Small groups that lack an incest taboo will be plagued by the ills of inbreeding; therefore, exogamy in mating will be selected for. As ancestor worship strengthens kinship ties over more and more generations, it also expands kinship ties over more nomadic bands creating extensive clans and tribes. These clans and tribes gather periodically at a special place to exchange future mates. They also started exchanging, i.e., trading for desirable objects not found in their usual local. Seashells, obsidian, red ochre and other materials have been found in campsites and graves more than 100-200 miles away from their closest source. The stronger the attraction of a special place, the greater the effort that distant clans will make to attend, so gathering spots that are turned into sacred sites of pilgrimage through special seasonal rites will enrich human communities. There are scholars who think HS had advanced trade networks that helped them out compete Homo Neanderthals in Europe (recent studies of Neanderthal DNA have shown that they were a distinct species not ancestral to HS). The need for all the clans to show up about the same time leads to fixed seasonal holy days and a religious calendar. The need to mark time for pilgrimage festivals led people to study the cycle of the moon and the movement of the constellations and, thus, move some of the spirit powers into the sky. Pilgrimage festivals still have major economic impact and serve in most religions as great sources of religious experience and solidarity.

Most, but not all, spiritual forces are viewed as personalities. In some cultures an impersonal force (referred to by anthropologists as Mana) is believed to manifest itself in certain individuals or classes of people and accounts for and rationalizes good or bad luck as well as personal, family or clan/class success and failure. Ritual pollution is usually viewed as an impersonal power and its cure depends upon impersonal bureaucratic techniques. But in most cultures the spirits are personified and ties of kinship relate the various spirits to each other. In some of these cultures all or most of the spirits are said to be descendants of an original Divine couple, or individual, or egg, or something else. This "creator" god is usually not central to the spiritual realm in later times just as a great-grandmother is recognized as a no-longer-very-active-progenitor. A monotheism that denies legitimacy of other gods did not exist before the century of Akhenaten and Moses. This is because the challenges that stimulate intelligent minds are very varied and the range of specific responses is very great.

In small groups, moral values can be based on utilitarian principles like 'do to others as you want them to do to you', or 'what goes around comes around'. But in larger or more complex societies with diverse classes and castes it may be more effective to root ethics in transcendent terms since there are not enough repeat interactions to validate utilitarian morality. As tribes became larger and villages grew, a judge who rewarded good people and punished evil people helped the community to instil its norms in its members.

With the exception of a sociopath, the intelligent minds of HS also have a conscious, self-evaluating, purpose driven aspect that needs to be satisfied because groups with a higher percentage of these kinds of minds were more stable and more effective. Guilt arises from many activities and needs to be atoned for. Self-discipline provides many advantages for an individual's survival and success. Most people, and all societies, need the structure of rules, community and divine discipline to maintain self-control. Hunters needed to kill animals, yet they obviously felt ambivalent about it because almost all human societies have rules either about offering some of the kill to the spirit of the animal killed, or a taboo on killing or eating certain animals. There are much fewer rules relating to eating plants. Spilling blood intentionally is fraught with spiritual ambivalence and tension that needs to be dealt with.

Sex is also never simply a natural act for HS. The mind is always involved. It is not just chance that the first thing HS becomes self-aware of in the Garden of Eden is being naked. HS is the only living species that clothes itself. Evidence of textiles from more than 20,000 years ago has been found in the cold climates of ice age Europe. However, the origins of clothing in Africa might have been resulting from a sense of modesty. Self-aware intelligent minds became moral minds, which became modest minds. Recent DNA studies of body lice that must lay their eggs in clothing show that these lice evolved from pubic lice that adapted to clothing that covered the pubic area. This genetic adaptation took place 42-72,000 years ago. Thus, HS have been clothing themselves for at least 42-72,000 years. Long before rules about property became important, rules of probity were in place.

The age when sexual modesty became evident is important. The Bible states that the first thing humans became aware of after internalizing the knowledge of good and evil was their nakedness. If this occurred 50-60,000 years ago, it fits right in with increasing evidence of more rapid spiritual and technological development. The tool kit of Homo Erectus, a species prior to HS, changed very slowly over the course of hundreds of thousands of years. Early HS tools changed more quickly over the course of tens of thousands of years. But about 50-70,000 years ago the pace of change increased substantially for HS both technologically and spiritually. Many paleoanthropologists think that a major improvement in linguistic ability occurred about that time. Physically, the HS body has not changed much in the last 100,000 years. The HS body 20,000 years before this transition period (50-70,000 years ago) is not different from the HS body 20,000 years later. But a major change did occur in artistic and other cultural activities. Perhaps the imaginative faculties of HS grew substantially, thus, causing inspiration and creativity to become more frequent and more widespread. That something very important happened about 50-70,000 years ago is clear even if we do not yet have evidence of exactly what happened.

I have not devoted much attention to the development of concepts of God in this essay. While beliefs about God are of great concern to Christians, most other religions focus much more on dietary self-discipline, public and private life cycle rituals, inducing mystical experiences, standards of social and personal behaviour, healing sickness and sin, and community ceremonies and celebrations. Formal creeds and religious beliefs are a small and recent development within the much larger domain of trust and group loyalty that has been evolving among pre HS species for hundreds of millennia. Recent brain studies have shown how organic trust and sharing are to human minds. Activities that build group loyalty and interpersonal trust enhance individual survival and promote individual spirituality much more than cognitive beliefs and ideologies. But urbanization, writing and mass communications may be changing this. Written revelation introduced a tremendous force expanding the power of religion both in space and time. The impact of religions with written revelations on historic human culture is comparable to the impact of modern science and invention on 20th century life styles. Both together will make the 21st century a turning point in human destiny.

What role does God (the One God of the revealed religions) play in all this? According to Genesis 4:26, human beings had begun to call upon the name of the Lord only in the days of Enosh. That could mean that prior to Enosh prehistoric religions evolved naturally. Only with the rise of scriptural revelations did the One God penetrate human consciousness. Or, it could mean that human consciousness had finally risen to the level of being able to receive Divine communication from the One God. It took over 3,000 years for monotheism to spread worldwide even with scriptural revelations. So, it is not surprising that it took over a 100,000 years to get humans ready to receive revelations.

Spirituality among Homo Sapiens has been evolving for at least 100-150,000 years. It is as deep in the HS brain as art or music. Recent studies, especially those on adult twins who were raised apart, suggest that genes contribute about 40% of the variability in a person's general religiousness. The idea that reason, socialism, or modern science would replace religion has turned out to be a wishful fantasy of people who bear a grudge against religion. Usually, their children or grandchildren return to religion. Religious rituals and ideas are ubiquitous and continue to evolve as the creative intelligent minds of Homo Sapiens encounter changes in their environment. This will most likely continue as long as HS have creative intelligent minds. Or, as Albert Einstein puts it: "What is the meaning of human life, or of organic life altogether? To answer this question at all implies a religion. Is there any sense then, you ask, in asking it? I answer, people who regard their own life and that of their fellow creatures as meaningless are not merely unfortunate but almost disqualified for life."[2]

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[2] Albert Einstein, *The World as I See It*, Sacramento, CA: Citadel Press, 1993, 5.

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BOOK REVIEW

Raphael Neelamkavil, *Physics without Metaphysics?* Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2006, pages xxvi + 382, ISBN: 8186861-89-0.

In the recent history of philosophy, an obvious shift has already taken place. While almost all philosophers attempted to address the perennial questions that intrigued humanity from its inception by way of formulating rationally 'consistent' systems of thought – either by focusing on the object or the subject, as the case may be – a number of prominent thinkers have questioned the validity of such systematisations, as no system comes up neutrally. They are convinced of the fact, for example, that the so-called *a priori* is no more completely *a priori*. In fact, there are many factors that have colluded to give rise to any thing that is said to be purely rational. Indeed, human reason itself is said to be the product of myriads of influences, spread through the whole history of human existence. The trend, therefore, is to challenge and overthrow all systems that have been accepted as valid in providing answers to the perennial questions, and to move beyond the boundaries of systems with the hope of striking a better understanding or grasp of reality. Although this deal seems to be quite captivating, especially among the neophytes, the fundamental issue continues to haunt us: Can human mind understand without a framework suitable to its nature, that is, in an absolute vacuum? Can reason try to understand the inner recesses of reality – which, in the traditional understanding requires a move from physics to metaphysics – just by unsubscribing to all systematic schools of thought available to us down through the centuries? Can rationalisation be nothing but anti-systematisation, leading to bits and pieces, whims and fancies, and the whispers of the moment, intelligible or unintelligible?

As Postmodernity has become a catchword in many a philosophical circle, and many researches are being carried out to disprove the absolutist claims made by old and new systems of thought, I wonder whether we can totally be freed from systematisation. In fact, a blanket rejection of systematisation will be suicidal to philosophical deliberations, as human mind cannot function outside a framework of its own, if at all it should make any sense. Moreover, I tend to think that Postmodern thought has gone astray from its target. It is true that the absolutist understanding of many a previous thinker or school of thought should be challenged; if not, it would be a blatant denial of the creativity of human reason. Moreover, Postmodernity brings to our attention that nobody can give the final word on the understanding of truth; we do philosophise, but within a framework which needs to be constantly challenged and overcome. Indeed, philosophising must remain an open project, accessible to and extendable by the entire humanity.

The same dynamics could also be located in the constant struggle between physics and metaphysics, in their attempts to nullify each other, or to win over each other. The medieval glory of metaphysics shelved during the Enlightenment, physics had its field day: an unending saga of success enjoyed by the modern sciences and their applications in different areas of human need have made the contemporary humans shun any thrust on metaphysical dimensions of reality. The questions such as 'what is reality', 'what are the dynamics of reality', etc., are usually answered within the parameters of physics; for many, only such answers are intelligible. Indeed, any answer that is beyond the terrains of verifiability is fashionably rejected as 'non-sense'. The trend, in general, seems to belittle and ridicule the value of that which cannot be given to us in observables and measurables: physics and its principles, in particular, seem to reign supreme, and to a good number of physicists they are undisputable and absolute! Thus, physics, without recourse to any metaphysical understanding, apparently tries to master reality. To many, therefore, what is said by the physicists is the final word on the nature of reality.

It is against the backdrop of these two trends – the philosophical arrogance of Postmodernity and the omniscience of physics in having copyrighted finality in understanding reality – I find the relevance and daring nature of Raphael Neelamkavil's earnest research in 'Einaic Ontology', an attempt to re-capture the lost sense of the real, by taking recourse to philosophy and physics, and many other allied disciplines.

In his *Physics without Metaphysics?* Raphael Neelamkavil successfully launches an articulation and defence of the ontology behind all sorts of philosophical endeavours, especially the philosophies of physics, astrophysics, and mathematics. It presupposes the history of ontological categories and scientific categories (space, time, cause, mass, etc.) from Plato and Aristotle through the modern theories in physical sciences to the twentieth century scientific ontology. His masterly focus, in particular, on Aristotle, Kant, Bohr, Einstein, Armstrong, Strawson, Quine, and Heidegger, and, in general, on thinkers in the philosophies of physics and mathematics, analytical epistemology and analytical ontology, fructifies in giving rise to the mutually collusive 'Einaic' categories of cosmology-epistemology-ontology.

The search in this undertaking begins by questioning the ability of purely classificational categories to do authentic scientific ontology, and with an admission that all that there are to Reality in ontological commitment are: (1) particular token entities (processes), (2) ontological particulars (species), (3) epistemologically connotative universals (species names, qualities, etc.), (4) ontological universals (*qualia* / ways of being) in processes, and (5) totalities of entities / processes. Of these, substances – tokens and totals – are transcendents, and universals – connotative species names, connotative qualities and ontological *qualia* – are transcendentals. He proposes to transcend this problem by using a new set of cosmological, epistemological and ontological categories that are maximally classificational, ideal, provincially singleton-case, and theoretically *a priori.* All of them, as Neelamkavil claims to show, are necessarily probabilistic and transcends particularism by the ever-widening nature of universals.

In general, Raphael begins his articulation based on certain assumptions: (1) the traditional categories equivalent to substance are to be maximized by its unique Transcendent domain, i.e., Reality-in-total; (2) the connotative presentations of the various categorial attributes in consciousness are to be maximized by the epistemologically connotative and Transcendently Transcendental universal of universals, i.e., the concept of Reality-in-general; and (3) ontological universals active at the processual-relational-essential aspect of beings are to be maximized by the verbal, nomic, nominal and Transcendental universal, namely, the To Be of Reality-in-total. Maximization of transcendentals is by inductive generalization, and that of transcendents is by inductive totalization. These make their mutual collusion and implication naturally generative of systems that are most truth-probable by reason of their idealistic coherence, theoretical pragmatism, probabilistic relativism, and, finally, realistic correspondence of results with facts.

The proposed categories have been argued out from the points of view of contemporary philosophy of physics, analytical philosophy of knowledge, and analytical plus some continental philosophy of being. First of all, the work seems to be very informative of various contemporary analytical trends related to its field of study. Secondly, it delves into the radically cosmological, epistemological, and ontological questions typical of the interface of scientific and philosophical discourse.

Against the Kantian epistemological approach, Raphael attempts to philosophically overcome the phenomena-noumena divide by an ontological approach to the cosmological category of Reality-in-total, which is the uniquely continuous substance that includes all possible (actual) worlds. To procure validity to this concept of substance, he moves to an analysis of the deep-seated scientific-instrumentalistic difficulties in Quantum Mechanics' manner of cutting up its object into a mere statistical phenomenon, which is conceived to be a wave at one moment and a particle at another, without any ontological commitment. He shows how this dichotomy may be overcome scientifically and how Reality may be conceived as thoroughly continuous – a curious nicety, indeed. Soon he moves to the foundations of the Special Theory of Relativity to fill up all possible values of energies and velocities in Reality-in-total as conceivable at the broadest possible realm of "all possible worlds," by a succinct argument in favour of the actuality of all possible velocities. In fact, he is by now on his way to derive the concept of Reality-in-total that is in all respects thoroughly continuous. This process allows him to ontologically bridge the phenomena-noumena divide in the concept of the maximal substance, Reality-in-total. Thus, he proposes Reality-in-total as the ontological-cosmological ideal of all discourses on the Worlds, with all its objectual-causal roots, which may possibly be in the Divine too. This allows him to claim that physics cannot be done without a scientific metaphysics: "genuine physics is impossible without Einaic Ontology / metaphysics!" (331).

He proceeds, then, to show that the category of Reality-in-total does not stay alone. It needs the support of its theoretical, conceptual, ideal category. He comes out with a well-knit justification of the need of universals in epistemological, cosmological, and ontological discourses. He derives his justifications in a face to face encounter with twentieth century analytical thinkers, who do not – or, partially and particularistically do – favour the use of universals in discourse. He makes also a contribution to the philosophy of universals by bringing clarity to the concept of the universal, i.e., by differentiating connotative-conscious (epistemological) universals from ontological universals that are objectually and probabilistically present ("over there," by an ontological commitment) in processes in their relational realm. This allows him to conceive of the connotative, inductively most generalized, the universal of all universals – Reality-in-general – as the epistemological ideal category of all ontological endeavours. He favours treating connotative universals and Reality-in-general as probabilistic because, ever after the Incompleteness Theorem of Gödel, we are not justified in fixing meanings of definitions and terms or validity of truth-statements as absolute. Instead, we must go on pushing axioms and the definitions of primitive and derivative notions, backwards into more general and succinct ones, in systems of any ontological order. So, connotative universals, which are presupposed in concepts, and hence, truth statements too, are ever-widening and probabilistic.

Finally, Raphael moves to the purely ontological Transcendental that makes both Reality-in-total and Reality-in-general possible. He presents a concept of the Transcendental To Be, the supra-categorial category beyond the ways of being (*qualia*) and the to be of entities / processes – which seems to be an improvement beyond the traditions of the concept of Being. This is the maximization of all ontological universals by inductive generalization, which, in turn, is based on inductive totalization. But, this goes counter to ontological particularism, which, in all its forms, does not go beyond tokens and their immediately wider universals! Confident of the suitability of the new trans-classificational category of the To Be proper to Reality-in-total for ontological consumption, he proposes that we can no more do scientific ontology merely by classificational categories, for they are particularistic. The author is aware of the fact that it is a handicap for science and philosophy at once to do science and regional ontologies without the most generally probabilistic and self-transforming scientific ontology. Particularism is the backbone of science without ontology. He highlights the problems of particularistic ontologies by making an in-depth study of the particularistic, linguistic, and ontological presuppositions in Quine, Strawson, etc. Without conceding the adequacy of any ontological thinking or scientific categories to the thinking of To Be, Raphael contends that we cannot at all justify any ontology, particularly scientific ontology! Moreover, scientific ontology possibilizes science and, hence, without Einaic thinking, science too is not what it can and ought to be. In short, only maximal categories can possibilize reality-in-particular and the discourse on actual entities / processes in the sciences! Moreover, by reason of the partiality of particularistic ontological universals with respect to the processes involved, each such universal refers to other universals and, hence, ontological universals too are probabilistic.

This probabilistic-universalistic inclination in thought allows this research to transform ontology, particularly scientific ontology, into Einaic Ontology, which is a pragmatic amalgamation of (1) Einaiology, which studies To Be in terms of Reality-in-total and Reality-in-general, and (2) General Ontology, which treats of Reality-in-total in terms of To Be and Reality-in-general. Due to the collusive nature of the three categories, one can never do any one of these two sciences in isolation from the other. This makes Einaic Ontology not only viable, but also ideal and inevitable, universalistic and probabilistically flexible, thus, frameworking the foundations of ontologies beyond metaphysical absolutism of ideal reifications and Postmodern, skeptic, or sophistic absolutism of relativisations.

In conversation with *Physics without Metaphysics?* I realize that this sort of ontology is also a scientific ontology, since the category of Reality-in-total is the maximized cosmological category of the sciences, which is potent enough to make physical reality, processes, and experiments possible. Although Raphael's work creates only the kernel for a new scientific ontology, it seems to hold the promise of further elaborations and the development of an entire system of philosophy in itself. Given the author's earnestness visible in this venture, especially in this text, I am hopeful that many of us would live to see more penetrating and extensive researches in the field of Einaic Philosophy, capable of shedding brighter light into the nature of reality, and to answer the perennial questions that keep us haunting in the realm of philosophical thinking.

I deem it important also to draw the attention of the reader to an Appendix that juxtaposes the concept of the verbal and aletheial Being, common to both earlier and later Heidegger, with the slightly different, but systemic, concept of the nominal-verbal To Be, co-extensive only with Reality-in-total, which Raphael proposes for collusive, probabilistic, and systemic reasons. He seems to hold that both the earlier and later Heideggerian concepts of Being are still anthropic and epistemic, because they do not give *a priori* objectual validity (i.e., based purely on the mind-independent and trans-phenomenal *fact* of Reality-in-total) beyond ordinary cognitive apriority, (1) to To Be as the Transcendental beyond *Dasein*'s appropriation of it in himself and beings, (2) to Being's giving itself to *Dasein*, and (3) to Being's enowning of *Dasein* and Being's projecting open (*Entwurf des Seins*) of *Dasein* within and out of Being-thinking. Raphael argues that such a Being is comparable to the connotative-epistemological category, Reality-in-general, which is the giving itself of To Be in human consciousness' appropriation of it as the connotative universal of universals. I think, with this interesting suggestion, combined with his Einaic Ontological evaluation of earlier and later Heidegger and demonstration of the exact Einaic Ontological difference between earlier and later Heidegger, this Appendix would invite both appreciative and critical evaluations by those ready to attempt beyond Heidegger.

Although the subtlety of the analysis carried out in this research and the complicated and complicating terminological fiesta that abounds the work may create an impression of an 'arm-chaired' philosophical discourse, it is specifically oriented towards practical import as well. The changed scenario of philosophy – especially its need to speculate and rationalise in collaboration with scholars who are involved in research in many other fields, particularly in doing science – is well aware that many among the best of the minds are involved in and committed to scientific investigations. The new scientific theories that have come up in the last few decades have significantly altered human conception of the reality in general, though without an anchor to hold on to in the vicissitudes of constant flux and rational unrest. So, the practical intent of Raphael's project is to draw from these theoreticians, and in attempting to go beyond them, he envisions the possibility of pioneering a novel way of doing ontology, not for its own sake, but for a genuine understanding of reality, which is the rationalised goal of all human searches. In this context he is categorical as far as his findings are concerned: "Einaic Ontology is a speculative, scientific ontology in the sense that it makes possible and transcends the categories of the sciences" (321). Moreover, he contends that the Einaic categories that he has justified in this work are applicable to their cosmological, epistemological, and ontological categorical concepts as well.

The novel perspective that has been unveiled in this work is a promise. If the theories available in the known history of philosophy could not settle the issues that intrigued humanity with any definitive answer, and if the continued search for answers is the duty of every human being endowed with rationality, *Physics without Metaphysics?* and its path-breaking theory of Einaic Ontology are worth our serious consideration. They hold an impressive promise for doing philosophy that looks for ultimate answers, especially amidst the myriads of theories that prop up every other day. Indeed, even for Raphael, this shall not be the final word in a philosophical settlement on the nature of reality; it is an initial but courageous and firm step, a step that must be pursued further to unveil and traverse unforeseen horizons in encountering and understanding reality.

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